

OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL CHURCH

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRY PARENT HANDBOOK



"THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION AND INITIATION INTO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY, TO THE LITURGY, SACRAMENTS AND SERVICE, CATECHESIS DEEPENS AND STRENGTHENS THE BELIEVER AS A MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH." *(NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS, JUNE 2003, UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS)*

Office of Children's and Youth Ministry

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church
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Office Staff:

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KEY PRINCIPLES

Faith formation at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church is based on three key principles:

1. **Faith formation is a lifelong process** of entering into a relationship with God through Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit. We strive to assist families in recognizing God's unconditional love, compassion, and forgiveness.
2. **Parents are primary religious educators of their children.** The program is here to assist you with this privilege and responsibility.
3. **Sunday liturgy is the “source and summit” of Catholic life.** Participation in the weekly Sunday liturgy is foundational; everyone gathers at the table to celebrate Eucharist, to be nourished and fed...leading others to the “Good News.”

CURRICULUM

Grades one through five utilizes the *We Believe* series by Sadlier Inc., found to be in conformity with both Diocesan guidelines and approved by the USCCB (US Conference of Catholic Bishops). If work is sent home, please be sure to review it with your child. Jr. High and High School programs use a variety of resources. Contact the Office of Religious Education for details.

PROGRAM GOALS

The faith formation program will strive to:

1. **Provide a Christian community to build relationships of friendship, trust, support, and prayer.**
 - To promote regular prayer and weekly communal worship.
 - Celebrating the principle events of the liturgical year.
2. **Proclaim the message of Jesus Christ:**
 - a. **By faithfully teaching the principle elements of the Christian message:**
 - The Mystery of One God
 - Creation
 - Jesus Christ
 - The Holy Spirit
 - The Sacraments
 - The Life of Grace
 - The Moral Life
 - Mary and the Saints
 - b. **To assist students in understanding and remembering:**
 - Traditional prayers
 - The 10 Commandments
 - The Beatitudes
 - The Laws of the Church
 - c. **Presenting the centrality of Christian service**
 - To lay the foundation for concern for issues of life, truth, and justice.
 - To provide opportunities of direct, hands-on service in the local and extended community.

REGISTRATION

NEW FAMILIES

Families must first be registered with the parish prior to registering your child in our Children's & Youth Ministry, Religious Education Programs. Families from other parishes are welcome, provided there is space. For Parish Registration, please contact the rectory at **(949) 673-3775, ext. 0**; or register online at www.olmc.net.

For Children's and Youth Ministry/Religious Education Registration, please contact the office of Children's and Youth Ministry director, John Bruscia, (949) 673-2719, jbruscia@olmc.net. All students in all grades must be registered.

RETURNING FAMILIES

Please re-register yearly with the registration packet provided by the office of Religious Education.

CHANGE OF HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Please notify the office if you move or change any of the following information: home, work, or cell phone numbers, address, emergency contact, allergies, or any information updated from registration paperwork.

ATTENDANCE

Weekly Attendance: children are expected to be on time each week. They should not arrive on campus more than 10 minutes prior to the starting time. Parents are asked to pick up children promptly at the regularly scheduled dismissal time; if a child has not been picked up 10-15 minutes after classes conclude, he/she will be brought to the Office of Religious Education to wait

Tardiness: tardiness distracts the class and interrupts the learning process. Parents are encouraged to make every effort to have their children arrive on time.

Continuity in attendance: Faith formation is life-long. Children need to be enrolled in the faith formation program every year and continue after the celebration of a sacrament. If a child does not attend the program the year prior to the beginning of sacramental preparation, the director may decide that the child needs a year of review prior to beginning sacramental preparation.

CHILD SAFETY

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents are to drop off and pick up students in grades 1-8 from our facilities using the *parking lot*:

- A) When arriving: park in the parking lot and escort students to meeting areas/classrooms.
- B) Returning for pick-up: park in the parking lot, come to the parish plaza, classroom, hall or church and escort your children to your car.
- C) If a parent desires to pick up a child *before* regular class time dismissal, the parent or guardian must report to the office of religious education to request early dismissal. The catechist may not dismiss any student directly from the classroom until a parent arrives.
- D) If you desire your child to travel home alone (walk, bike, etc.), provide the office of religious education a written, signed, and dated statement indicating as such. The note should include a statement that "Releases Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Employees, and Volunteers of all Liability after your Child's Departure."
- E) If you are unable to pick up your child when our sessions conclude, please telephone the director to discuss who will be handling your child's pick up. **If a parent, or authorized adult does not arrive to pick up your child, and a parent cannot be reached within 45 minutes of the scheduled departure time, the Newport Beach Police Department may be contacted to care for the child until a parent is available.**

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Age appropriate, safe environment training, is provided each year for all students in parish faith formation programs utilizing the "Circle of Grace" and "Kids and Company" programs for grades 1-8 and "Breaking the Silence" for high school age youth. All children enrolled in parish programs must participate in this annual instruction unless a parent signs an "Opt-out Form." The program provides safety strategies to help reduce the possibility of victimization, abduction, and sexual exploitation. Parent Information Sessions are provided annually through the Office of Religious Education.

All programs take a positive and constructive approach. This helps children learn to recognize and avoid situations that place them at increased risk and teaches them how to respond to situations and make safe decisions. Through age appropriate presentations including slideshows, games, and other activities, the curriculum reinforces each child's awareness, assertiveness and judgment.

FIRST AID

The children's & youth ministry office has available to all catechists a supply of Band-Aids, rubber gloves, and Ziploc bags. If there is a serious injury, the office will call 911 and notify parents immediately.

FIRE AND EARTHQUAKE

Fire and earthquake drills are practiced periodically. We utilize the parish parking lot for the movement of children if parish structures are deemed unsafe. In the event of an emergency evacuation, parents will pick up children from the parking lot by first checking-in with the authorized adult in charge of the children at that time.

WEAPONS

Weapons of any kind (real or make-believe), or the threat of violence to any child or adult is at all times unacceptable. If this is identified, the child will be isolated and the director will notify the parents to come to the office. In the case of a real weapon, the police will be notified. The child may not return to the program until a psychologist has evaluated the situation and provide a written report stating the child does not pose a risk to himself, or herself, or others.

DISCIPLINE

Proper, virtuous conduct, cooperation, attention and courtesy are expected at all times while on parish grounds. Beginning each year, catechists post classroom behavioral expectation, students who fail to meet these behavior expectations will be subject to the following procedures and consequences:

- First Minor Offense: catechist will speak to the child directly regarding appropriate behavior.
- Second Minor Offense: the catechists will speak to the child in private and discuss appropriate behavior.
- Third Minor Offense: the child will be asked to go to the office to meet with the director of Religious Education; a parent phone call may be required depending on the issue.
- Forth Minor Offense or First Serious Offense*: the child will be escorted to the office to speak to the director of the program who will call the student's parents to come and pick him or her up. A child cannot reenter the program until the parent and child have met with the catechist and the program director.

*Serious offenses refer to but are not limited to such things as: fighting, stealing, possession of drugs or alcohol, vandalism, bullying, possession of a weapon, or aggressive behavior.

Parish Property: children are expected to respect all property and buildings on the parish campus. Parents are responsible for the cost of anything that a child damages or takes that does not belong to him or her.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Sunday Bulletin: please read the Sunday bulletin for announcements regarding parent meetings, special events, deadlines, etc.

Newsletter: parents are e-mailed periodic newsletters with information about the faith formation program; it also supplies information about a variety of parish programs and events.

Custody: if parents are divorced or separated, the faith formation program presumes that both parents have custody unless documentation that he or she has sole custody.

Parent Concerns or Complaint: the Religious Education office phone number is 949-673-2719, please call at any time you wish to discuss an issue or ask a question. Please be reminded of the protocol in addressing a complaint: first, directly communicate with the catechist, or person in conflict. If the issue is unable to be resolved, contact the Director of Religious Education, John Bruscia; if the issue or complaint remains unresolved it will be directed to our Parish's Pastor, Msgr. Baird. If after these steps you feel the issue remains unresolved at the parish level, you can write a letter to the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation explaining the situation and the steps you've taken to resolve it. The Associate Director of Faith Formation, the Director of Parish Faith Formation, or the Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry will get back to you within 72 hours of receiving your letter.

MISCELLANEOUS

Lost and Found: if you child loses an article, please check with the Children's & Youth Ministry office. If items are not picked up after 30 days, they are subject to be delivered to a local, public-service agency.

OTHER PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Liturgy of the Word for Children: this program takes place weekly during our 10 a.m. Sunday Mass. The children have the opportunity to hear the readings and reflect on them in age-appropriate ways.

Children's Choir: OLMC's Children's Choir is open to any child in the parish and is free of charge. Rehearsals are held periodically directed by our parish's director of music, Clinton Rusich. You're welcome to contact him directly for information, crusich@olmc.net.

Altar Servers: Altar servers must be in fourth grade or older to participate unless an older sibling is already an Altar Server, if that be the case, third-graders may be invited to participate on a case-by-case basis. Altar server training is directed by parishioner, Mr. Guy Lowery, gandrlowery@sbcglobal.net. Please contact him directly to set up a practice day and time.

Family Service: opportunities are offered to all families in the parish. Many volunteer options are available at the parish including food and clothing collections, helping with various parish functions, and through local service agencies, soup kitchens, etc.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/YOUTH MINISTRY GENERAL INFORMATION:

Elementary: Grades 1-5 meet in the parish hall Monday afternoons from 3:15 - 4:45 PM.

Junior High Youth Ministry: Grades 6-8 meet in the parish hall Tuesday evenings from 6-7:30 PM,

High School Youth Ministry: Grades 9 & 10 meet weekly for Confirmation preparation through our comprehensive parish youth ministry program. All high school sessions (with dinner) are held Sunday evenings from 6-7:30 PM in the parish hall following our 5 PM Mass. Grades 11 & 12 are invited to participate in a program which includes, service activities, discussions, and leadership training and formation to help as "peer ministers." Please check e-mail and the Sunday bulletin for program details and announcements.

Baptism: for infant baptism, please contact the rectory at (949) 673-3775, ext. 0. For school age children, please call our Director of Religious Education, John Bruscia, at 949-673-2719.

Eucharist (First Holy Communion) and Reconciliation (Confession): First Communion and First Confessions are integrated into our *second grade* religious education program. If you have a child in grades three or higher who has not yet received the sacraments of "Eucharist" and or "Reconciliation" and is interested in receiving them, please contact John Bruscia for details.

Confirmation: Confirmation is a two-year program for high school students in grades 9-10. The Sacrament is conferred at the end of the 10th grade school year. A required "Student and Parent Orientation Dinner & Meeting" takes place at the beginning of the school year. Accommodations can be made for 11-12th grade high school students seeking this sacrament. Preparation to receive the sacrament is embedded into our high school program.

Holiday and Early Dismissal: Religious Education and Youth Ministry sessions do not meet on “legal,” school holidays. Elementary sessions meet at the regular time on any early dismissal/teacher conference days.

PARENT-STUDENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CHILDREN’S & YOUTH MINISTRY GRADES 1-12

Meeting Times:

- Grades 1-5 meet in the parish hall on **Mondays** from **3:15 - 4:45 PM**
- Grades 6-8 meet in the parish hall **Tuesday** evenings from **6-7:30 PM**
- Grades 9-12 meet in the parish hall **Sunday** evenings from **6-7:30 PM**

Arrival and Dismissal:

- Staff and volunteers are responsible for the supervision of students *only* during stated meeting times listed above. Staff and volunteers are not available to supervise children at other times. Parents assume full responsibility of children before and after stated hours.
- Parents are to drop off and pick up students from our facilities using the parking lot.
 1. When arriving: park in the parking lot and escort students to meeting areas/classrooms.
 2. Returning for pick-up: park in the parking lot, come to the parish plaza, classroom, hall or church and escort your children to your car.
- Skateboard, rollerblade, roller-skates, and scooter use is not allowed on church property.
- Please be on time, coming late may be disruptive and students may miss content.
- If a parent desires to pick up a child before regular class dismissal, parent or guardian reports to the Office of Religious Education to request early dismissal.
- If you desire your child to travel home alone (walk, bike, etc.), provide the office of religious education a written, signed, and dated document indicating the above, including a statement “RELEASING OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL CHURCH, EMPLOYEES, AND VOLUNTEERS OF ALL LIABILITY AFTER YOUR CHILD’S DEPARTURE.”

Classroom Behavior:

It is our joy to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the “Good News,” to the children of our parish. We work hard to create an environment of trust, love, and mutual respect to help facilitate each student’s faith development and Christian growth. Our time together is an important component in your child’s faith formation; we need the cooperation of everyone. Below, please review behavior-expectations essential to group environments. All students will be informed of the expectations outlined below. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these, please contact the Director of Religious Education, John Bruscia, at (949) 673-2719, or jbruscia@olmc.net.

Student Behavior Expectations:

- Students are to respect persons and property at all times; this includes thoughtful attentiveness to both catechist and fellow students.
- No hurting anyone with actions or words (mocking, insulting, excluding, laughing at, etc.).
- Hands, feet and all body parts are to be kept to oneself.
- One person speaks at a time, raising hand for recognition.
- Prayer time will be respected and disruptive behavior avoided. Students are to be attentive.
- Remain seated unless adult in charge grants permission otherwise.

- No leaving the classroom or church property without expressed permission.
- All food or snack stops and consumption should take place prior to arrival at OLMC.

Parents:

- Please go over the above behavior expectations with your child before you send them to class. Be sure they clearly understand them and will follow them. If a discipline problem becomes repetitive, the parent will be called for consultation and possible remedial action.
- Parents are the primary catechists; your involvement is essential. You are encouraged to discuss your faith with your children, including praying together. **Regular attendance at Sunday Mass is expected of all parents and is essential to nurture faith and build community.** Sacramental action takes place in the context of a community; as we grow and work together as a community, we can better follow Jesus' command to "love one another."
- Please *review* any "take home assignments." They provide an opportunity for you to interact with your child on the topic.
- If your child has special challenges in maintaining attention or sitting still, or if he/she is on medication for this condition during the day, please discuss these issues with the director of religious education so we may plan strategies to help work with your child.
- If your child has any "special needs," please let us know on the registration form to help us work with them. This would include medical conditions in need of monitoring.
- **Concerns/Questions/Complaints:** the Religious Education office phone number is 949-673-2719. Please call at any time you wish to discuss an issue or ask a question. Please be reminded of the protocol in addressing a complaint: first, directly communicate with the catechist, or person in conflict. If the issue is unable to be resolved, contact the Director of Religious Education, John Bruscia; if the issue or complaint remains unresolved it will be directed to our Parish's Pastor, Msgr. Baird.

It is understood that each student in this parish religious education program may have special needs and may require certain individual assistance with those needs. The parish religious education program will endeavor to assist you in providing religious education for your child within the ordinary structures of parish programs. The undersigned parent/guardian acknowledges the current programs, staffed by volunteers, may be discontinued or a particular student may be required to complete an alternative course of religious studies at the sole discretion of the religious education director.

Emergency Response:

In the event of an emergency (earthquake, fire, etc.) children will be brought to a secure area of the parking lot. If picking up your child under these conditions, please "check-in" with the adult who remains in supervision of the children until they are safely cared for. Children will be released to a parent or "authorized adult" listed on the Registration Form.

Accident Insurance:

The Diocese of Orange provides limited, supplemental accident insurance coverage for registered children in our program (see Myers Stevens' fact sheet). The supplemental accident insurance becomes active only after your own medical coverage is used to treat your child if the accident occurred when your child was at the church, or a church sponsored event. **All accidents/injuries must be reported at the time of occurrence to the Office of Religious Education.**