

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
Kindergarten through Eighth Grade  
HANDBOOK

2021 - 2022



*Immaculate Conception Church*

*101 St. James Street  
St. Marys, IA*

*August 2021*



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## Catechists for 2021 - 2022

K & 1<sup>st</sup> grades - Sara Hawk

2<sup>nd</sup> grade - Michelle Fick

Catechists for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grades, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades and 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades: Katie Vonnahme, Pam Wearmouth

### Contact Information/Bulletin/Website

Should you have any questions or concerns, regarding the RE program/handbook please contact Father Chris Fontanini at the office at 515.961.3026.

In regards to registration or general information you may contact Michelle Fick, DRE at 641.297.2223.

In regards to current calendar, activities and events refer to the Sunday Bulletin.

The website [immaculateconceptionstmarys.org](http://immaculateconceptionstmarys.org) will have the handbook, registration form, calendar, and other information regarding the RE program.

Dear Parents,

Welcome to all of you as we begin this new academic year of 2021-2022! Thank you for having a desire to have your children's religious education reinforced through the fine teachers here at Immaculate Conception, St. Marys! The documents of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II have stated that, "parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of the faith." The home is the domestic church of which the parents are in a sense, pastors; shepherds of their flock. Our teachers can only reinforce what has been and will be taught at home.

Hence, in the short time, we have your children, we can only cover a small portion of the vast amount of knowledge and experience in living out the Catholic Christian faith. It is our hope that you will continue to live out your Christian vocation of marriage by passing on the faith by leading your children to a deeper relationship with Jesus which would culminate in seeing God face to face one day forever. It is expected that the parent and student will frequent Mass weekly in order to be sustained and nourished by the Word, the Sacrament (in which Jesus is particularly present), and through the community of faith that supports and helps us live out our faith, recite prayers daily, and attend to those who are less fortunate through the corporal works of mercy (i.e. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, giving drink to the thirsty, etc.)

God Bless you all! I look forward to getting to know you more and to be involved in the formation of your child(ren)!

Sincerely,

Fr. Chris Fontanini, Pastor  
Immaculate Conception, St. Marys

### **Dress Code**

All students are expected to come to class dressed in appropriate attire. No baseball caps or hats are to be worn in the building or during religious practice or function. Exception would be those wearing a head covering for a medical purpose. No signs or emblems contrary to our religious beliefs should be worn on clothing.

### **Electronics/Toys**

Toys, electronics including cell phones are discouraged from bringing to class, these items tend to be a distraction and divert attention away from the lesson being taught. Should a student have a cell phone, it is to be turned off and put away.

### **Safety**

With the recent tragedies at various institutions, it is of utmost importance that we have procedures in place. The Safety Committee will meet with the staff at least once a year for updates and training. It is important to be vigilant of our surroundings and to report any unusual or suspicious activity to the Pastor or DRE.

## Catechist/Substitute/Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering as a catechist is a rewarding experience. It is an opportunity to share your Catholic Faith with our young members of the parish, and to grow your faith personally.

Refer to the registration form to volunteer as a catechist, substitute, classroom helper, etc.

## Professional Ethics for Catechists

Information about students and their families should be used discreetly. Conferences with or about the students should be held at an appropriate time and place. Comments need to be kept on a professional level. Catechists should inform the Pastor or DRE when they discern any serious emotional, psychological, or spiritual needs of their students.

Catechists should strive to make their daily lives reflect their faith by prayer and receiving the Eucharist weekly. They should prepare thoroughly and practice accountability to the Pastor, DRE, staff, parents, and students.

All catechists must be a practicing Catholic in good standing, complete the VIRTUS Protecting God's Children training, and have a background check. All Catechists receive a copy of the Diocese's Code of Conduct Policy.

## Immaculate Conception Religious Education Program's Mission

WE BELIEVE that the goal of religious education through formation is to make us aware of the action of God in our lives, both within us and outside of us. Religious formation is faith brought to understanding.

WE BELIEVE in the domestic church, the parents are the primary catechists in teaching their children the Catholic faith. Attending parent meetings, family activities, celebrating the Eucharist and the Sacraments together and reinforcing Christian values in your home, will help your children grow in their faith as they journey with you. (Vatican II Document - Declaration on Christian Education)

WE BELIEVE, that you have entrusted your children to us to deepen the Faith you have given them as parents.

THEREFORE, we will work with you to awaken this awareness in your children and encourage them to gradually accept responsibility for their own Christian development, as they are able.

### OUR MISSION

As we minister to the families of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, it is the mission of the Religious Education Program to support and assist parents in the formation of their children's Catholic Faith along with striving to instill an abiding love of God and neighbor, using our Blessed Mother Mary as our model and guide. We strive to impart to each child the doctrines of our faith in its fullness, as both knowledge to be learned, and a life to be lived.

Certificate is needed. If, the child is not baptized contact Father Chris immediately, this sacrament needs to be conferred by November 1.

- Attend 90% of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade RE classes; the catechist will keep a record of class attendance.
- Mass attendance is 90%; **parent(s) are asked to sign the Mass attendance log folder (kept in the classroom).** If you attend Mass at another parish please note this on the log sheet and provide a church bulletin.
- Attend the parent/child sacramental preparation centers.

What your child should know:

- The Sign of the Cross
- The Act of Contrition
- The steps in making a confession
- The order of Mass (actively participating, genuflecting, when to stand, sit, kneel, etc.)
- How to receive the host (in the hands or on the tongue)

### **Confirmation**

Confirmation is a two year program (9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> grade) and is conferred in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Students will receive instruction/preparation at St. Thomas Aquinas. Contact JoAnn Sayre, DRE at 961-3026 for requirements, registration, and more information.

### **Calendar**

The calendar will be published separately from the handbook and will be available at the August Parent Meeting. The calendar will be posted in classrooms, found on the website, and will be published in the Sunday bulletin.

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

We ask the person delivering/picking up the children to come inside to get them. This will insure students are supervised and prevent incidents. Please do not leave children at the hall if the catechists have not yet arrived AND pick them up when class is dismissed. Please let us know if your child(ren) will be walking.

### **Attendance/Absences/Tardiness**

Religious Education is an ongoing process. Continuous participation in the Religious Education program (grades K-8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) is needed for a true understanding of our Faith and proper preparation for the reception of the sacraments; along with participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each Sunday and Holydays of Obligation. A recognition award is given to students who attend 90% -100% of the classes.

**Absences** - With classes on Sunday we understand that some absences are unavoidable. However, we ask that you notify your child's teacher in advance of the absence. If an absence is due to illness let the teacher know as soon as possible.

**Tardiness** - Needs to be avoided, as this is a disruption to class. If this becomes an issue we will gladly visit with you to help with a resolution.

### Class Cancellation

If there is inclement weather (snowstorms, ice storm, fog that leaves little or no visibility), we will cancel classes. Please consult the local television stations such as channels 5, 8, 13 for cancellation updates. I do not want parents or students risking their lives to get to religious education classes. Common sense would be in order.

### Behavior/Discipline

Every person is worthy of being treated with the care and respect as we are made in the Image and Likeness of God. Therefore, classroom behavior should be characterized by genuine Christian care, mutual respect and honesty.

The catechists are volunteers who are giving their time and effort for the benefit of the students. They have a very limited time in which to teach their lessons. They are capable of dealing with normal restlessness or lack of attentiveness that can occur in any classroom setting. However, they are not expected to deal with students who do not cooperate. When such situations arise, parents will be notified. We will work with parents to correct such problems.

### Sacramental Preparation Requirements

There is an expectation that those receiving the Sacraments, particularly First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation will attend 90 percent of the classes and 90 percent of the Masses. This expectation serves to prepare ourselves for a particular Mass, to receive a Sacrament. We receive the graces of the Word, the Sacrament, and the People of God. If we are not there, we deprive ourselves of these graces and the community of faith and vice-versa. It is imperative we attend class to learn about the Sacrament or Sacraments and the reason for receiving the Sacrament or Sacraments. Hopefully, this will not be perceived as a burden or a hoop to jump through but as a way of understanding Christ's love for us. Extenuating circumstances such as illnesses or recent divorces that have presented logistical challenges will be taken into consideration.

### First Holy Communion & Reconciliation

Preparation for reception of the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation is a two year program - 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

#### Requirements are:

- Attend 80% of the First grade RE classes and 80% Mass attendance; **parent(s) are asked to sign the Mass attendance log folder (kept in the classroom).** The catechist will keep a record of class attendance. If, you attend Mass at another parish please note this on the log sheet and provide a church bulletin.
- The child is baptized - if not baptized at Immaculate Conception or St. Thomas Aquinas a copy of the Baptismal

- All Saints (November 1, Holy Day), this activity is held the end of October.
- Christmas (Epiphany) program is in December or the 1<sup>st</sup> /2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in January
- Mardi Gras is the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, Lent preparation.
- Awards Presentation is the last class of the year and students' accomplishments are recognized.

### Prayers Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Pre-K & Kindergarten - Sign of the Cross, Glory to the Father (Glory Be), Angel Guardian (traditional), and Grace Before Meals

1<sup>st</sup> grade - Hail Mary, The Lord's Prayer (Our Father), including Pre-K & Kindergarten prayers

2<sup>nd</sup> grade - Act of Contrition, including Pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade prayers

3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> grade - Marian Prayers, including Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade prayers

5<sup>th</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> grade - Apostle's Creed, including Pre-K through 4<sup>th</sup> grade prayers

7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> grades - Gloria, Nicene Creed, and prayers in the Mass, including Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade prayers

Each classroom has a prayer box containing prayer activities and catechists will spend some class time using these activities to help children learn prayers. As children learn/master their prayers they will receive a recognition award. Families have been given a "Family Prayer Activity" folder. Parents are encouraged to establish a prayer time at home, using the "Family Prayer Activity" folder to pray the prayers their children are learning.

### Grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>

Immaculate Conception does not have a high school program (AKA CYO - Catholic Youth Organization). All high school students are encouraged to attend St. Thomas Aquinas's STAT program that is on Wednesday evenings. Contact Joann Sayre at 961-3026 for registration and more information.

### Registration

- Parents/Guardians are to complete a registration form prior to classes starting in the fall.
- Please list **ALL** children on the registration form. This will help for future planning for our program, and Confirmation and STAT at St. Thomas Aquinas, Indianola.
- Families are asked to have a parish registration on file, and update their registration should there be changes in the family status (e.g. births, adoptions, deaths). Contact Leasa Garrett, office manager at 515.961.3026 or email [lcs3garr@yahoo.com](mailto:lcs3garr@yahoo.com).
- Registration forms will be available in August (Church vestibule), at the Parent Meeting in August, or online [www.immaculateconceptionstmarys.org](http://www.immaculateconceptionstmarys.org).
- Completed registration forms can be returned at the Parent Meeting in August, placed in an envelope in the Church vestibule, or given to the RE director.

### New Students

- All new students/families need to be registered in the parish.

- Parents/guardians provide a copy of the baptismal Certificate of the child entering the first grade.
- Provide documentation if the child has attended another parish religious education program and/or received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.
- For children who have had no previous religious instruction the Pastor and RE director will determine the appropriate grade level.

### Fees

There is no fee for attending our Religious Education Program. Therefore, children are expected to be responsible for treating, caring and be respectful to property, classrooms, equipment, books, materials, etc. Should there be deliberate damage to classrooms, personal property, etc. there will be a meeting with parents/guardians and child to come to a resolution for reparations.

### Class Times

- Classes are on Sunday from September through April
- **Classes are from 9:00 - 10:15 AM**, after the 8:00 Mass.
- On occasion Mass will be longer for a variety of reasons. When this happens, students and catechists should go directly to class so what class time is remaining can be utilized.
- On Doughnut Social Sunday students need to get their pastry and beverage and go directly to their class room.

### Pre-K through 8th grade

The RE program is using Our Sunday Visitor's (OSV) "Call to Faith" Kindergarten and first grade meet together; Second grade's focus is preparing to receive sacraments. Due to enrollment numbers 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> are together and 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> together and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> together. Three Catechists rotate with these groups. One catechist teaches the curriculum for that particular grade, another catechist teaches prayer and the third catechist teaches Mass, the Catholic Church (liturgical calendar/colors) and vocations.

### OSV focus for each grade:

Pre-K - God Made the World - Symbols

Kindergarten - God Loves Us - God our Creator

1<sup>st</sup> grade - God is Good - Salvation - the Mass - the Church year

2<sup>nd</sup> grade - God Cares for Us - Eucharist and Reconciliation

3<sup>rd</sup> grade - We Believe - Catholic Faith - Liturgy and Mary

4<sup>th</sup> grade - God Guides us - Commandments and Beatitudes

5<sup>th</sup> grade - We Worship - Sacraments (Bible)

6<sup>th</sup> grade - Gods Calls a People - Old Testament (Bible)

7<sup>th</sup> grade - Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life - Jesus Christ

8<sup>th</sup> grade- The Church Then and Now - Holy Spirit

### Family Activities

As part of our curriculum there are family centered activities throughout the year. This is an opportunity for the domestic church; the parents to practice and share their Catholic Faith with their children.