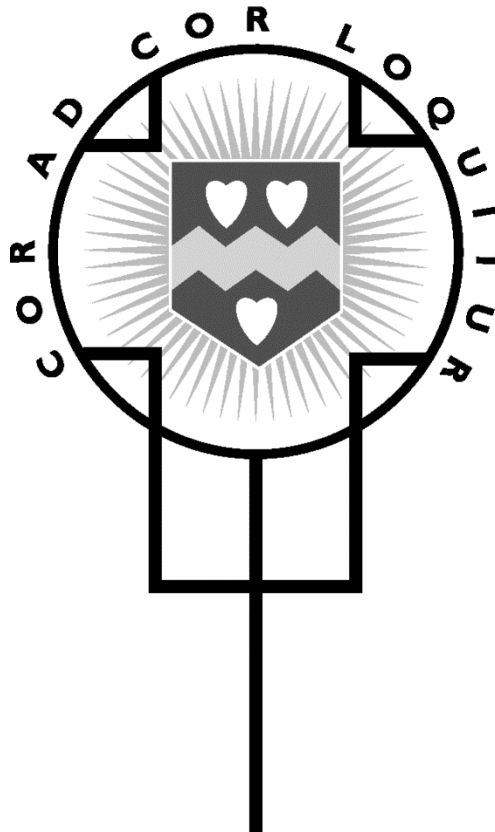


**St. Thomas More Parish &
Newman Center
Catholic Education Program
(CEP)
Parent Handbook 2019-2020**



CATECHESIS:

The Catechetical program at the St. Thomas More Newman Center is guided by the foundational documents of the Catholic Church on the International, National and Diocesan level including Pope John Paul II's *On Catechesis in Our Times*, *The General Directory on Catechesis*, *The National Catechetical Directory* and *Echoing the Word of God*. In accordance with those documents, our parish catechetical programs will include the following elements:

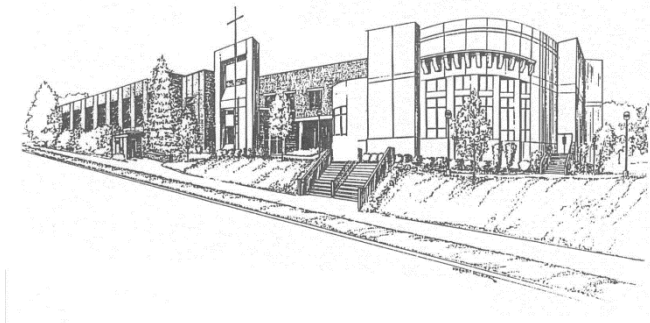
Message: The story of scripture and the teachings of the Church will be communicated within the context of the faith story of each person and the signs of the times in society and the world.

Community: Efforts will be made to form Christian community through interaction and faith sharing.

Prayer and Worship: The participants will be exposed to many forms of prayer and worship the goals being to help them become persons who have a close relationship with God that is expressed in prayer and to enable them to participate fully, consciously and actively in liturgical and sacramental life.

Service and Justice: Participants will be exposed to the call to service and justice, which is inherent in the message of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

The catechetical program of the St. Thomas More Newman Center carries out the command of Jesus to "...go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20). The purpose of the program is to minister to the children/youth by introducing them to Christ, by forming them in the faith of the Catholic tradition and by informing them regarding the teachings of the Church so that the students involved in the program will grow in the awareness, knowledge and practice of their faith. (*General Directory for Catechesis* 87)



PROGRAM GOALS

Catechetical programs operate out of a clear set of goals that help everyone involved know what the program is striving to accomplish in a more specific way. The goals flow from the mission statement, make it more concrete and demonstrate how the mission statement is being implemented. The goals of the parish catechetical program are:

Goal 1. To provide a program of formal religious instruction for the children and youth.

Goal 2. To support parents in their role as primary catechists of their children.

Goal 3. To offer sacrament preparation to children as they become ready to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Goal 4. To help children discover the richness and challenges of Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.

Goal 5. To build a strong Catholic Identity among the children of the parish.

Goal 6. To give children an experience of the Church as community.

Goal 7. To deepen the prayer life of the children.

Goal 8. To motivate children to live lives of charity and justice.

Goal 9. To share the liturgical and sacramental richness of the Catholic Tradition.

CURRICULUM

Texts and Resources: Textbooks and other materials used in the classroom are in conformity with the teachings found in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Presently textbooks used in the program for grades 1-5 are from the *Christ Our Life* series by Loyola Press which was introduced in the 2013-2014 academic year. We currently use the 2016 edition. Middle schoolers (grades 6-8) use the EDGE program published by Life Teen. Parents who would like to examine the text material should contact the director of the religious education program.

Wednesday PreK & K classes use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program. Emily Shull is certified to teach Level I & Level II of this Montessori based catechesis program. More information is available at cgsusa.org

Sunday Pre-K classes use a two-year series of letter based lessons from A to Z. Year 1 is mainly bible stories and Year 2 focuses on elements of liturgy and sacraments. Many are adapted from the Catholic Icing *Catholic ABCs* and others have been created by Emily Shull, current DRE, or volunteer catechists.

Sunday Kindergarten classes use a series of Bible based lessons created by Joseph Bradley, a volunteer catechist and former Director of Communications and were adapted by Emily Shull.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents who are enrolling their children in the parish catechetical program must be aware of their responsibilities as parents. **It is the role of the parish to assist the parents in nurturing the faith of their children.** It is essential that the parents agree to follow parish policy and work with those who are the designated leaders of the parish program. In order to promote the faith growth of the children and to insure a smooth-running program, parents are expected to fulfill the following expectations.

A parent who would like their child to attend the program...

1. Attends Mass weekly with his/her child.
2. Takes responsibility for his/her role as primary catechist.
3. Should be a registered member of the parish. (Exceptions can be made if you attend another local parish.)
4. Are responsible for providing the parish with information regarding the child's baptism and other sacraments if applicable.
5. Collaborates with the catechists in the program by sharing faith with the child at home and by making sure the child does any required follow up to the lessons taught in class.
6. Teaches their child the traditional prayers of the Church at home.
7. Maintains an open line of communication with their child's catechist.
8. Brings their child to class at 10:00am on Sundays and 6:30pm on Wednesdays and picks them up at the end of each session time.
9. When the child is dropped off for class, makes sure that their child enters the building where classes are held and goes to the classroom.
10. Brings his/her child to class dressed appropriately, ready to participate with enough rest and nourishment and makes sure the child has gone to the bathroom, if needed, before class.
11. Attends parent meetings and parent/teacher conferences when requested.
12. Is supportive of the catechist especially in the area of discipline.
13. Reads this handbook, completes and turns in the forms necessary for registration.

POLICIES

The following policies have been developed by the Parish Council Education Commission with the cooperation of the pastor/ pastoral administrator and the director/coordinator of the Catechetical program. They have been approved by the Parish Council and are in agreement with the policies of the Diocese of Jefferson City. Families who wish their children to participate in the program must agree to abide by these policies.

ADMISSION

Registration: Any family that is registered in St. Thomas More Newman Center may enroll their children in the catechetical program. In order for their children to be admitted the family must complete the registration and student information forms and indicate that they have read and accept the policies contained in this handbook. Parents are also required to fill out a health form on each of the children they seek to enroll in the program.

Pre-registration for current families is held each April and a general registration for all children is held each August before the beginning of classes. Families who wish to enroll their children during the year may do so by contacting Emily Shull, the Director of Religious Education at emily.shull@comonewman.org or 573-449-5424 ext. 203.

Fees: Each Child in CEP or EDGE is \$50 which covers the textbook or curriculum materials and supplies.

Baptismal Certificates: Families with children who were not baptized in this parish must bring a copy of the baptismal certificate, along with any other sacramental records, when they enroll their child for sacramental programs. Children who have not been baptized will be accepted into the program provided that the family intends to have them baptized and is willing to sign them up for the children's initiation program.

SACRAMENTS/LITURGY

Sacrament Preparation: The parish follows the diocesan policies for sacrament preparation. A summary of these policies follows.

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist: The parish cooperates with the parent to catechize children for the sacraments. Parents who enroll their child will be provided with resources that will enable them to do catechesis in the home that will parallel and enhance the parish program. The catechist in the classroom will provide a formal preparation that is found in the text.

Children must be prepared to receive First Reconciliation before preparation for First Eucharist may begin. Each child when ready will be given an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Children are strongly encouraged to receive Reconciliation before Eucharist.

The parent and child along with the pastor/pastoral administrator will make a determination when the child is ready to receive Reconciliation and Eucharist. Canon Law states that once the necessary catechesis is completed and the

person has an adequate understanding of the sacrament of Reconciliation and/or Eucharist, no one shall be deprived of the right to receive these sacraments once he/she expresses a desire for it.

CLASSES

Attendance: Children who are enrolled in the parish catechetical program are expected to be in attendance each week. It is the responsibility of parents to insure their presence. Because classes are held only once a week, the child who is absent misses a great deal. **If it is necessary for a student to be absent, the coordinator of the program must be contacted in advance and notified of that fact. If a student is regularly absent without an excuse the director/coordinator will attempt to contact the parents.**

Class Schedule: Classes will begin the last week of August and end the first week of May with breaks for holidays. St. Thomas More Newman Center offers 2 class periods

Sunday mornings from 10am-11:00am

Wednesday evenings from 6:15pm-7:30pm

EDGE Sunday evenings only from 6:00-7:30pm

Sunday and Wednesday classes are not interchangeable, so students who miss a Wednesday class can't make it up on Sunday or vice versa. Sunday and Wednesday classes have separate schedules and Catechists.

Arrival and Dismissal: Classes are held in classrooms on the second floor of the parish. EDGE is held in the MPR. Parents are asked to bring their children no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the beginning of class. Children dropped off more than 15 minutes early will be unsupervised. Parents are to see to it that their children enter the building and go to their classrooms when they drop them off. Students will not be allowed to loiter outside the building. Parents are asked to pick their children up at the scheduled end of the class session. Children are to be picked up only by parents or their designate. Parents can notify the CEP office at registration or at any time about who is authorized to pick-up their child. All children ages 3-2nd grade are expected to be walked to and from the classroom door by an adult. Children up to grade 5 are expected to be walked into the building by an adult and it is preferred that all children be walked into the building by an adult for any event. We are in a very high traffic area because we are located on the University of Missouri Campus. We take your child's safety seriously and ask that you do the same.

Classroom Visits: Parents are allowed to visit their children's classroom at any time. We appreciate a call or email to the DRE or Catechist prior to class.

DISCIPLINE

Everyone involved in the program is challenged by the words and example of Jesus to respect each person's right to be treated not only with dignity and respect but also with love. In order to provide for a safe and well ordered program, in which students and catechists can learn and follow Jesus' call to love, some rules for behavior are necessary. Each catechist will compose some specific rules which the students in their classroom are expected to follow. The following rules apply to all students in the program.

- Respect is to be shown for all catechists and other adults in leadership roles.
- Students are expected to display a Christian attitude in the way they dress, speak and behave.
- Students are to avoid behavior that disturbs the learning environment or is disrespectful or dangerous to others.
- Behavior that might be interpreted as sexual harassment is to be avoided by students and catechists. (see below)

Process for dealing with inappropriate behavior:

1. Each catechist will compose a list of classroom rules and post them for all the students to see.
2. Initially, catechists will handle any discipline problems in their own classroom
3. Catechists will handle discipline problems in a positive manner.
4. Students whose behavior becomes a continual problem in the classroom may be sent out of class to the coordinator or other adult in charge of supervision.
5. Anytime a student is sent from class for discipline reasons their parent may be contacted either by phone, in person or in writing. If a student is sent out of the classroom more than once or for a very serious incident the parent will be contacted immediately.
6. In order to get back into the classroom, the student and parents will meet with the catechist and coordinator to resolve the issues.
7. If the student's behavior does not improve, the parish reserves the right to ask the student to withdraw from the program.

HUMAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Human Sexuality Education: The parish follows the diocesan policy for Human Sexuality Education. A summary of those policies follows.

Each parish within the diocese is responsible for providing an educational program regarding human sexuality if one is not provided by the local school system. A comprehensive program of education in human sexuality may take different forms according to the needs and resources of the parish.

St. Thomas More Parish & Newman Center has elected not to provide human sexuality education for 2018-2019 as it is provided by the Columbia Public School system.

TOUCHING SAFETY PROGRAM

The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem. Our children must also have the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The *Teaching Touching Safety* program guide (*Teaching Touching Safety Guide*) is a tool designed to assist parents and teachers in this important task. The Touching Safety program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

Basic structure of the lesson plans: This program and each included lesson are founded on the principles of appropriate relationship boundaries in the broader context of Christian values. All lessons are age-appropriate, and help children and young people develop the vocabulary and boundary distinctions necessary to empower them to begin to recognize inappropriate behavior by others, while practicing appropriate relationship boundaries in their own lives

The program is intended for all children and youth K-12 participating in diocesan schools and parish religious education programs. All parents have the option of choosing that their children not attend the program.

To make certain that all children are trained, the Teaching Touching Safety program will be annually conducted for children in grades 1.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Parish leadership wishes to be vigilant regarding sexual harassment whether between or among catechists and/or parish leaders, among students or between catechists/parish leaders and students.

Sexual harassment is defined as:

- Threatening to impose adverse employment, academic or disciplinary or other sanctions on a person unless favors are given; and/or
- Conduct, containing sexual matter or suggestions, which would be offensive to a reasonable person.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, imitations or comments
- Visual contact such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures
- Physical contact such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movements, or interfering with work study or play because of sex
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a conditions of employment, grades or other benefits or to avoid some other loss and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors
- Retaliations for having reported or threatened to report sexual harassment.

Parents who become aware of incidents of sexual harassment should report to the pastor/pastoral administrator or to the director/coordinator of the catechetical program.

WEATHER AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Cancellation of Classes: Because of inclement weather or other conditions classes may be cancelled from time to time. The following direction for parents is offered:

If Columbia Public Schools are cancelled or dismissed early, there will be no religious education classes that evening.

To find out if classes are cancelled, parents should listen for reports on the following television stations: KOMU Channel 8, KMIZ Channel 17.

We will also send an email to all parents in the event of a cancellation and post the information on the announcement section of our website comonewman.org

If CEP is cancelled Children's Liturgy of the Word is also cancelled. This does not mean that Sunday Masses are cancelled.

Fire Safety: The Fire Marshall has inspected the building where the program takes place and escape procedures have been established. The escape route for each classroom is posted in the rooms. There are regular fire drills.

Storm Safety: Procedures have also been established in case of tornado or other weather related emergency. These procedures are also posted and practiced regularly.

SICKNESS AND INJURY

Sickness: It is very important that a parent completes and returns the medical form for each of his/her children (all forms are in the back of this handbook). Should a student

become ill while at class, his/her parent will be contacted immediately. If the parent is unavailable, attempts will be made to reach the person listed on the medical form. The director or other responsible adult will make every effort to keep the child comfortable until he/she is picked up. Medications will not be administered to the child unless they are emergency medications such as an inhaler or epi pen. Emergency medications should be included on the child's medical form. Children are not to bring non-emergency medications with them to religious education classes. A copy of the medical form is required to complete registration for each child.

Injury: An attempt will be made to have a volunteer nurse or Red Cross certified first aid provider available when classes are in session. Catechists are asked to report any injury to the director immediately. If an injury occurs, first aid will be administered and the parent will be contacted. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the director/coordinator will call 911 to request an ambulance or transport the child to the University Hospital emergency room. A first aid kit is available in the main office and the CEP closet.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Parents will be notified regarding any event or field trip for which the children will be taken off the parish grounds. No child will be required to attend such an event. However, if the child does desire to attend a field trip or special event the parent must fill out a permission slip and turn it in to the coordinator. A copy of such a permission slip is included at the end of this handbook.

CATECHISTS

The catechists that teach the classes in this program are volunteers. The parish has made an attempt to screen them to insure that they are capable of handling the responsibility involved in their ministry. The parish also offers training courses that increase the skills needed for the catechists to be successful. The director/coordinator of the program supervises the catechists in order to help them fulfill their role responsibly. As parents you are asked to understand the challenges involved in being a volunteer catechist and to support them in whatever ways are possible. If any problems arise, however, please contact the catechist and discuss the problem. If that is not satisfactory, contact the director/coordinator.

HOMESCHOOLING

Some parents, especially those who homeschool their children instead of sending them to public school, may choose to offer catechetical instruction to their children at home. Because the pastor/pastoral administrator is responsible for all forms of catechesis in the parish, it is the parent's responsibility to communicate with the pastor/pastoral administrator about the fact that they are offering catechesis to their children at home. Parents are asked to follow parish guidelines regarding text material used. Parents who

wish to prepare their children for sacraments must do it under the guidance of the pastor/pastoral administrator and/or the parish director/coordinator of catechesis.

Photo Policy

Photos/Videos of minors (under 18) may be used by the St. Thomas More Parish & Newman Center if a photo release has been signed by the parent or guardian of the minor or if parents agreed to the photo policy during electronic registration. These release forms are typically distributed during registration for the CEP and EDGE programs or for a short-term event such as Vacation Bible School.