

MARIA REGINA R.C. CHURCH

FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM



2022-2023 PARENT HANDBOOK

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Maria Regina R.C. Church
Rev. Jason U. Grisafi, Pastor

Faith Formation Office: 516-541-0921
Rectory Phone: 516-798-2415
www.mariaregina.com

Faith Formation Staff

Mrs. Alice Moran, Catechetical Leader, Grades 1 - 5
amoran@mariaregina.com

Ms. Tina Rine, Catechetical Leader, Grades 6 - 8
trine@mariaregina.com

Mrs. Henrietta Gentile, Office Assistant
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Faith Formation Office ~ Pastoral Center Hours

Monday - Friday
9:00 am to 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
(Locked mailbox outside our door for drop off)

Our School Faith Formation Office is located
in the school Nurse's Office and open during
Faith Formation sessions on
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays

We are a Eucharistic Community - Mass Schedule

Saturdays: 9:00 am; 4:00 pm
Sundays: 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, 12:00 Noon

Weekdays: 7:00 & 9:00 am
Holy Days - As published



The Faith Formation Program of Maria Regina Parish has the rich tradition of our Catholic faith both as its heritage and as the basis for promoting religious formation of our parish children. The parish stands ready to assist, but never replace, parents in their vital role as the primary educators of their children's faith. Each family, as a "domestic church", needs to take very seriously its obligation to impart the fullness of the Catholic Faith to a new generation of Catholics. To achieve these objectives, we invite parents to join with us in full support of our program and in the implementation of these guidelines. All those who touch the life of a young Catholic in some way – parents, catechists, clergy, parish volunteers, and fellow parishioners must take their role **seriously and responsibly by fully living their baptismal commitment** and giving witness to the place and importance of **following Jesus Christ. As Catholics, we believe that a crucial aspect of this living faith is participation in the life of the local Church community ~ the parish.**

The Faith Formation program cannot function without the generous support of its volunteers, including catechists, class assistants, and substitute teachers. The Diocese of Rockville Centre mandates a program of safe-environment and abuse awareness training to ensure protection for children in parish sponsored activities. Volunteers in parish programs must participate in a Virtus "Protecting God's Children" training session, complete a background check and diocesan code of conduct. The Volunteer Form and instructions are available on the parish website. Virtus training conducted at the parish will be announced periodically in our bulletin and additional sessions conducted throughout the diocese is available at www.virtusonline.org.

The practical aspects of our Faith Formation Program are described in this calendar for your convenience. As you read through them, please remember that these details are but one small facet of the total faith formation of your child(ren).

Enrollment into the Maria Regina Faith Formation Program

- All families **are required to register as members of Maria Regina Parish prior to registering their child/children in the faith formation program.** A parish ID number will be issued by the Rectory when you join the parish. Faith Formation Registration forms are available on the parish website at www.mariaregina.com. Forms for registration are in the Faith Formation tab. You must indicate your parish ID number on the registration form and bring it to the Office of Faith Formation located in the Pastoral Center when registering.
- **For grade 1 students,** a copy of your child/children's baptismal certificate **must** be submitted with the registration form.
- Transfers from another parish faith formation program will require verification. The parent is responsible to provide the catechetical leader with a letter of transfer from the child's previous faith formation program. Children must successfully complete each level according to the individual parish guidelines. All children who have not received prior instruction will be evaluated on an individual basis by the catechetical leader to determine the appropriate level at which they should begin the faith formation program here at Maria Regina.



- ***Each stage is considered a pre-requisite for the next stage.*** The sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation are two-year sacramental programs. Preparations for the sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation begin in first grade and are celebrated at the end of the grade 2 instructional year. Students in grades three through six continue to learn and mature in their faith understanding. The journey to full initiation in the Catholic faith begins at baptism and culminates with the celebration of Confirmation. To enter the Confirmation program here at Maria Regina, all students are required to complete the first six years of religious formation in the Catholic Church. The Confirmation program encompasses the grade 7 and grade 8 instructional years. Confirmation is celebrated at the end of the grade 8 instructional year.
- Situations where students are registering without any prior faith formation/religious education will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the placement level and an individualized catechetical plan will be created. It would not be unusual for such placements to include a requirement that involves the parents and children in some form of faith formation/religious education before the beginning of the faith formation/religious education year.

The faith formation of our parish children is at the heart of our ministry. You are strongly encouraged to register early so that your child will be placed in a session of family schedule convenience. Due to the attendance requirements, **students cannot be registered after October 7, 2022.** All parents are encouraged to register early so that children have a smooth beginning of a new year of faith formation experience.

Our Children with Special Needs

Providing faith formation for children with special needs is an important part of our faith formation program. Our catechetical leaders will meet with parents to discuss concerns and every reasonable effort will be made to assist parents to provide the best possible experience for the child. If your child has an IEP, we request that a copy of your child's current IEP be submitted annually. Please contact the office at your earliest convenience so we can schedule an appointment and make any necessary accommodations and an individualized catechetical plan for your child.

Family Tuition

Early registration will help assure you in obtaining the requested session and time for your family needs. It also enables us to secure the necessary number of catechists and volunteers needed for our program, and to order textbooks and resource materials. As always, if this presents a financial burden, please do not delay your family registration. Contact the office and one of our catechetical leaders will speak with you regarding an individualized payment plan option. For family registration fee rates, please see the forms available on the parish website.



Two principles of the Catholic Church's Social Teachings are the life and dignity of every person and the care for all of God's creation. Because we believe that every human life is sacred, and especially our children, the "*Think First & Stay Safe Program*" is presented to all children in grades 1-6 throughout the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Student presentations will be facilitated by our catechetical leaders, supported by catechists in the instructional setting and discussed at parent meetings. A "Think First & Stay Safe" Child Lures Prevention Handbook is distributed to all parents and guardians for the purpose of reviewing the topics presented during the program in an age-appropriate manner at home.

EpiPen

If your child requires the use of an EpiPen in an emergency, please contact the office so you can complete a *Food Allergy Action Plan* prior to the first day of class. Students cannot self-carry without written authorization and the completion of the Food Allergy Action Plan.



Snacks

Absolutely no food, candy or drinks are permitted in class *at any time. No Exceptions.*

Arrival and Dismissal Policy

Please be reminded that parents and students are not permitted to enter or exit the school building through the front doors. The front entrance is only utilized by catechists and their children, or parents picking their child up due to illness or early release. We appreciate your cooperation in adhering to this safety matter. Please proceed with the utmost caution when driving through the parish & school parking lots during arrival and dismissal times.

Arrival: All students need to enter the school building through the **brown doors at the rear of the school** by the **basketball courts**. For the safety of your child(ren), these doors will be open **10** minutes before the start of class rain or shine. If you are more than 10 minutes late, please enter at the doors to the right of the flagpole door in the front of the school and come to the office to sign your child into class. Students must be escorted by their parents or a guardian when arriving late for class. If your child is late three (3) or more times, this will count as one (1) absence in their attendance record.

Dismissal: All students need to exit the school building through the **brown doors at the rear of the school**. For the safety of your child(ren), these doors will be open **5** minutes before the end of class rain or shine. Grades 1-5 must be picked up by a parent or guardian unless other arrangements have been made with the catechetical leader.

If someone other than the parent or legal guardian is to pick up the child, the catechetical leader must be informed of this change in writing prior to the beginning of class.

If a parent/guardian is not there to pick up the child at dismissal time, your child will be taken to the Faith Formation Office by the catechist where he/she will remain with the catechetical leader until your arrival. The child will not be released unless the parent comes into the school office to pick up the child.

Attendance & Lateness

Lateness and irregular attendance interfere greatly with a student's progress and is disruptive to both the catechist and the rest of the class. Please make sure you allow yourself time to get your child to class on time. If your child(ren) will be absent, please call 541-0921 or email the catechetical leader to report the absence. Children should complete the next chapter in their book prior to returning to class the following week.

We permit a maximum of 3 absences. Excessive absenteeism and incomplete lessons can impede your child's formation process and progress. If your child is late three (3) or more times, this will count as one (1) absence. If your child will be absent for an extended period, we request that a doctor's note be submitted to the catechetical leader explaining the reason for the absences. A temporary catechetical plan will be created to keep your child on track with the program requirements if health matters prevent them from social interaction and school attendance.

Early Dismissal from Class

Commitment to faith formation class is important, therefore, sports practices or games do not constitute a valid reason for early dismissal. If a student must be excused from class for some urgent reason, a note, signed by the student's parent or guardian is to be given to the catechist at the beginning of class. The note should contain the reason and time of early dismissal. Parents must come to the office to sign the student out for an early release and receive a pink release form to be given to the catechist. Children will not be released without this form. Students are never permitted to leave the building without an adult escort in these situations. If your child leaves class for an early release three (3) times, it will constitute one absence on their records. Please enter the building through the front doors when picking up your child for early release.

Visitors

All visitors must report directly to the Faith Formation Office in the school upon arrival. No unauthorized persons will be allowed in a classroom unless they have been previously authorized by the Catechetical Leader. If you would like to arrange a classroom visit during the instructional lesson, please contact the Catechetical Leader to schedule the visit prior to the class time.

Books and Supplies

All religious education textbooks used in our program are in conformity with the guidelines published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Each week all students are expected to bring their religion book(s), a folder, and at least one writing utensil to class. If a book is lost during the year, it will be necessary for you to purchase a new one for your child. Charges for replacement books will apply. In grades 6-8, the Bible and YOUCAT (grades 7-8) must be brought to class as well.

Homework

It is extremely important for parents to discuss with their child/children what they have learned during the instructional session. At times, homework will be assigned by the catechist or assignments distributed by the catechetical leader. Please check your child's folder regularly for assignments, notices, calendar updates, and parent communications. In grades 6-8, students will be supplied with a student syllabus for usage when your child is absent or there is a cancellation due to weather conditions. They should complete the lesson noted for the class prior to returning to class the next week.

Restroom Usage

Please encourage your child to use the bathroom ***before*** arriving for class. If your child has a physical condition that necessitates visits to the bathroom frequently, please notify the catechetical leader. The children are not allowed to make frequent trips to the bathroom as this can be disruptive to the classroom instructional setting.

Program Closings/Cancellations

If the program is cancelled due to inclement weather, it will be announced on Channel 12LI (www.longisland.news12.com) and Newsday Online. If Maria Regina School or the Plainedge School District is closed, the Faith Formation Office will also be closed. Please do not call the Rectory. Email notification will be sent out when possible regarding closings and it will be posted on the parish Facebook.

Instruction Outside the School Building on Parish Grounds

There are occasions when a catechist will escort the students to our Church or Pastoral Center for instructional lessons or prayer opportunities. These occasions are not considered "field trips" and no prior notification to the parents will be communicated.

Communication

We envision the faith formation of children as a cooperative effort of parents, catechists, catechetical leaders, and the entire parish community. We encourage parents to be in communication with the child's catechist. The Office of Faith Formation will communicate with parents on a regular basis, usually by email or by sending letters home with students. It is imperative that any changes to your phone numbers, email address or home address be communicated at the earliest convenience so that you will not miss any important notifications regarding the faith formation objectives of our program.

Assessment

All levels are assessed both *informally* and *formally* throughout the instructional year. Assessment may include verbal and written reviews as well as optional alternative assessments. Parents will be contacted by the catechetical leader if there are concerns regarding the formation of your child.

Photographs

Throughout the instructional year photographs of the children in our faith formation program may be taken during various activities. At times, we may utilize these photos for promoting the faith formation program. Maria Regina Parish reserves the right to take and use pictures of the children enrolled in Faith Formation classes. **If parents request that their child not be photographed during class time, a written letter refusing consent must be received by the Office of Faith Formation by October 1st. Emails will not be accepted.**

Dress Code

Appropriate clothing must always be worn. When necessary, students will be reminded of the following guidelines once. If the student continues to disobey the rule, the student will be referred to the catechetical leader to set up a meeting with the parent.

- No clothing may be worn with suggestive or questionable language or drawings.
- No bare midriffs or any shirt/top that exposes cleavage.
- If shorts are worn to class, they must be no shorter than two inches above the knee.
- No basketball jerseys or see-through mesh unless a T-shirt is worn underneath.
- No sagging pants that expose undergarments.
- No pajamas, bedroom slippers and shower shoes. Heelys, also known as shoe skates, are not permitted in the building.
- Hats and hoods may NOT be worn inside the church or parish/school at any time
- No chains or any attire that could be used as a weapon.
- Baseball caps must be removed when the student enters the school or church.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, selling or distributing any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, or tobacco-like substance, vape or electronic cigarette, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, or injection. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or at parish sponsored events will be immediately suspended from the program. A conference with the student, parent, Pastor and the Catechetical Leader is mandatory for re-admittance into the program. Any student selling or distributing will be turned over to the local authorities.

Custody Issues and Orders of Protection

Where there is an order of protection in effect, a copy of such must be submitted to the Office along with a photo of the party identified in the Order. The parent or guardian must provide a list of names of those persons allowed to pick up the child. This list must bear a notarized

signature of the parent or guardian. Any authorized adult picking up the child must present photo I.D. to the Catechist. If the Catechist sees the person referred to by the Order of Protection, the police will be called immediately.

Home Schooling/Home Study

There is no home study permitted unless due to a health condition, your child is presently being tutored at home by the school district and is unable to attend class in a communal setting. If for any reason we cannot accommodate your family scheduling needs, we will assist you in contacting one of our neighboring parishes to find a suitable Faith Formation Program for your children.

Conduct/Discipline Policy

All students are always expected to exercise self-control and conduct themselves properly. They are expected to respect the property of the school, the classroom reserved for their use, and the teacher and student materials within the classroom. In addition to these most basic expectations, the following discipline policy shall be followed by our students:

- We always expect courtesy and respect from our students. That respect should always be shown to the catechists, parish priests and staff members of our program. In addition, students are expected to treat their fellow classmates with compassion and respect as they journey in faith alongside each other. We take any accusation of bullying seriously. Parents should contact the catechetical leader immediately if they feel that their child is in a situation whereas they have or may become a victim of bullying.
- Students are expected to display a Christian attitude in the way they dress, speak, and behave. That attitude extends to all aspects of their lives and encounters with others.
- Students must avoid any behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment. Gum chewing or candy eating is not permitted during class or when the children attend parish sponsored activities, prayer services and mass.
- Students are not permitted to have any hazardous items/materials in their possession while at church or class.
- Cell phones must be off while the children are in the building. If usage of a cell phone is not curtailed after a verbal warning by the catechist or catechetical leader, the phone will be confiscated by the catechist and a parent/guardian will be required to retrieve it from the Faith Formation Office after class.
- All hand-held electronic devices (IPODS, handheld game systems) must be left at home.

The Catechetical Leader shall use reasonable judgment in responding to student misconduct and accusations. The first instance of student misconduct may warrant a verbal warning unless the action is serious enough to require parental involvement. If the Catechetical Leader feels that the misconduct is serious, the student will be removed from the class and the parent will be called immediately to pick up his/her child. The Catechetical Leader and the Pastor may determine that it is necessary to remove a student from the program entirely.



We are blessed to have dedicated catechists that respond to the catechetical mission of the Church by their active participation in our ministry. It is important to remind students that these faith-filled volunteers give freely of their time to enhance and enrich the faith formation of our parish children. Encourage your child to see that in their presence in our ministry, they are living out the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ that we are each called to. As always, we thank our catechists for continuing to represent the Church in a special way by sharing their talents and faith as a dedicated Maria Regina catechist!

The Pastoral Staff & Office of Faith Formation Staff