**CATECHIST HANDBOOK**

**PRESCHOOL – SIXTH GRADE**

**St. Thomas the Apostle Parish**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM 2019-2020**

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Office of Religious Education

272 King Street, Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014

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**re@stthomascl.church**

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**A LETTER from OUR PASTOR**

 Dear Catechists,

 Someone died, and left you a fortune! Thank you so much for telling this to our children, and helping them “claim the prize.” Our role is not to get our young people to regurgitate the words of the Creed; it’s to get them to heaven!

“At the heart of catechesis, we find in essence, a person, the Person of Jesus Christ!” --John Paul II.

As your pastor, I place myself, yourself, and all of our parish, inside the Heart of Christ, in Whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let Him teach you, that you may teach them!

For all you do to spread our holy Faith, through word and example, known and hidden, know that Jesus and I are very grateful and proud of you! If there is any way I may be of assistance, please let me know.

In Christ,

Fr. Evans

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| **A LETTER from our DIRECTOR of RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**Dear Catechists,  The start of a new catechetical year is exciting! We look forward to seeing teachers and students return. If you are new to our religious education team we welcome you and are very pleased and blessed to have you serve among us. Please be assured that we are grateful to have you join us and are ready to assist you in every way.  Throughout this year you will have an opportunity to share stories, videos, prayer, textbook activities and special projects with your students. Most importantly you will share your gift of faith and service with your students. Know that your witness to the faith is the most important teaching tool you will use in your classroom. Your willingness to lay down your life each week to come and share your time and energy to nurture the faith journey of the children of St. Thomas the Apostle is an immeasurable gift. We appreciate you, your unique abilities and your dedication to our children.  We realize that most of you are not teachers by trade, but are willing to mentor these children in the Catholic faith. While the children may not retain every bit of information that you give them your enthusiasm and love of the faith will help them each week to carry away that little seed that their parents can nurture and the community can support and watch grow . Through this educational and religious experience our young people will grow to enrich and strengthen our faith community in new ways . The Religious Education staff is ready to assist you to make sure that the future leaders of the Catholic Church have a strong foundation of knowledge and a deep love of God and His church. God Bless You!   *Charlotte Kolodzik, DRE* |  |  |
| **II ROLE OF THE CATECHIST** Your role as a Catechist in the St.Thomas Religious Education Program is to model the values of our Catholic faith as you nurture the faith journey of the children in your care and to assist parents in passing on our Catholic faith to their children. In accomplishing this, you will recognize a need to nurture your own faith life. To support you in these efforts we offer a number of In-services, the parish Adult Enrichment Sessions, and a daily reflection book.As a Catechist/Aide you make a commitment:* To be responsible for the teaching sessions of our Religious Education Program
* To grow as a Catechist/Aide through attendance at In-services (one session minimum yearly) and thus to work towards certification.
* To be a practicing Catholic yourself—to attend mass on Sundays and Holy Days and be a person of prayer and of living faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

**CLASSROOM COMMITMENT**RE begins on Tuesday, September 17 or Wednesday, September 18, 2019 for all students in Grades K - 6. Meet in the Pierson Street Church. Students will be seated according to grade level. After opening with prayer, children will go with teachers to their classrooms. Parents will pick up students at the classroom if student is in grade 1, Kindergarten or pre-school each week. Grade 2 thru 6 students should be walked to the courtyard by the classroom aide at the conclusion of class to meet parents. You may share your contact information with parents if you choose to do so. You will be teaching a lesson on the Kerygma 4 Kids the first week. Catechists/Aides are asked to arrive a **minimum of 15 minutes** prior to the start of class. After dismissal of students, you are asked to check that the classroom is in order prior to leaving. Please see the RE Calendar on the St. Thomas RE website <http://www.stthomascl.church/re> . Scroll down to “*Religious Education Calendar of Events.”* Other Catechist information can be found at [http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html) **IN-SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES**\*Catechist kickoff/orientation dinner schedule: **Wednesday, September 4, 2019** will be for **Family Faith Formation** catechists(Jerusalem Room in Lower Old St. Thomas Church) **Tuesday, September 10, 2019** will be for **Tuesday afternoon** catechists (Martha Room at the Parish Center) **Wednesday, September 11, 2018** will be for **Wednesday afternoon** catechists(Jerusalem Room in Lower Old St. Thomas Church)\*Please attend the dinner meeting that corresponds to your teaching time.During this evening you will also select materials, tour the campus, locate your classroom, storage area, mailbox, etc… meet your fellow catechists, share ideas that have worked, tips and have questions answered.Other opportunities are available in the area and are available on the St. Thomas RE website. [http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html) . You will be informed of others via your mailbox. Since these In-services are an important way for you to reflect on and share your own faith journey and teaching experiences with other catechists you are strongly encouraged to attend. It will also help you to know of any changes to the program for the year. |  |  |
|  **CERTIFICATION** The Rockford Diocese has established a standard for certification for those teaching religion in the diocese. You are *not* required to be certified in your first year of teaching or aiding. All we ask is that you make an effort to work *towards* certification for the sake of your own growth as well as for the credibility of our Religious Ed. Program. The DRE will work *with* you in ascertaining credit for certification through classes and experience. You can find information under “Catechist Information” on the St.Thomas RE website. [http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html) Scroll down to “*Catechist Certification*” for more information on the certification process. |   |   |

**PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN**

In accord with the Bishop’s mandate that ***every*** employee and volunteer who works with children within parish schools, religious education and youth ministry programs be trained to recognize and properly act upon allegation and incidence of abuse.

The McHenry Deanery is offering “*Protecting God’s Children*”. You can find this and other information on the St Thomas RE website under ***“****Catechist Information****” .***

[http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html)Scroll down to “*”Catechist Forms”*.-” *Volunteer Forms*”. All that is required of Catechists is listed on this page.

This online training course is accessed through the diocesan education website at ceorockford.org. Click on the Virtus icon and follow the instructions.

This *must be done prior* to your first week in the classroom. You only need this training once.

 **III SUPPORT STAFF**

The Office of Religious Education is responsible for providing ways and means to nurture the individual faith journey through formal religious education. These classes are for children attending public schools, ages Preschool through Sixth Grade and enrichment opportunities for parents and Catechists/Aides. Our primary task is one of support to the Catechists/Aides of the Religious Education Program.

**SECRETARIAL SUPPORT** *Christina Benkert*

Monday—Friday 9:00 am — 2:00pm

***Phone Number: (815) 455-9787***

re@stthomascl.church

The RE Staff are available to handle classroom supply requests, information requests, etc., on the phone, via email or in person. They take care of all computer records and data essential to keeping a program this large functioning efficiently and with HEART!

**RE SESSION COORDINATORS** *Nancy Miller and Renee Lyons*

The RE Session Coordinator is available on class days (Tuesday & Wednesday) from 3:30 pm to closing. The RE Session Coordinator’s role is to assist the DRE in responding to teacher’s class needs, discipline, attendance, dismissal procedures and tending to the many details which arise during the Religious Education Sessions. The Coordinator tends to the preparation of class materials, teacher requests and prepares weekly notes and reminders to all teachers/aides prior to class time as well as on– site assistance. During class times the RE Session Coordinator is generally available in the hallways checking on the classrooms.

**DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** *Charlotte (Eichenberg) Kolodzik*

Charlotte Kolodzik, the DRE, is responsible for developing the curriculum and goals (in consultation with the Pastor), recruitment of Catechists/Aides and other volunteers, and the training and support of Catechists/Aides in the Preschool-6th Grade R.E. program. Prior to classes, schedules and teaching outlines are prepared, and training sessions conducted. Throughout the year, you may contact Char for assistance on teaching content, student behavior, etc. – whatever you need to facilitate the faith journey of your students or yourself.

**MENTOR CATECHISTS**

Several of our Catechists have years of experience they are willing to share. If you are new to teaching, they are available to assist you. Their role is to be a support and liaison for you so that the needs/special projects, etc. of your particular grade are met. If there are any questions regarding the activities or of the course materials the mentor catechists are a great source for information and would be more than happy to assist you at any time during the year.

**IV PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

The following information will assist you in keeping an organized record of students.

**RECORD KEEPING**

The class list you receive at the Catechist kickoff/In-service is a **preliminary** class list and does not reflect last minute additions or deletions. You will have an updated list the first week of class, please let us know if there is a discrepancy in the list and the students in your classroom!

**After the third week of classes** you will receive an official class list. For future changes you will receive add/delete forms from the RE Office. Alert the RE Office if a new student enters your class without notification from the RE Office. If a student is absent several times, notify the RE Office. Catechists will be notified if a student is deleted from a Class, when the RE Office is notified by parents that the student will no longer be attending.

**ATTENDANCE** will be taken by the RE coordinators/or Adult volunteers as the students enter the church prior to the meeting in the church. If there are late arrivals to your classroom after Attendance has been taken, please inform the RE Coordinators or the RE Director of those late students. Their names will be added to the attendance.

**PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress Reports are distributed to students when classes resume in January. They have been redesigned so that parents can sign and send the response back to you (teacher). You will receive these blank forms in December to complete during our Christmas break for the January distribution. If you have any concerns on completing these progress reports please contact Charlotte @ 815-455-5400 x407 or

ckolodzik@stthomascl.church

**DISCIPLINE**

If a situation arises in which a student is disruptive, try to handle it within the classroom, or by an aide taking the offending student for a private talk in the hallway. If the student continues to be disruptive, the Aide should then take the student to the reception area in the Parish Center where the RE Coordinator will be located. If this does not solve the problem, then the parents will be contacted and a solution for the benefit of all students will be sought between the parents, student, teacher, and coordinator or DRE.

**It is essential that a positive learning environment be fostered for all students and that will be our goal in terms of discipline.**

**CLASS PROCEDURE/CLASSROOM CARE**

We will once again begin each class in the Pierson Street church for a large group teaching lead by a priest. Catechists should be in the church 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the large group teaching.

Only Catechists will be allowed in the school *prior* to large group teaching in the church. We will have volunteers greeting students in front of the church and ushering them to their seats. We will be seated by grade level. No student will be allowed in a classroom unless a teacher or aide is present.

Since our RE classes are conducted in a shared parish facility – King Street & Lake Street schools, and Parish Center meeting rooms, we need to emphasize to students the importance of respect and care of the classroom, desks, etc.

*Our students should not go into the desks or use any items belonging to St. Thomas School day students* since any supplies needed are available from the RE department.

**Suggestions:** If special projects using glue, paints, etc. are planned, please bring protective covering for desks, tables in classrooms.

If desks are moved, make a diagram beforehand so all desks are returned to proper place. It is advisable to have students in the same desks each week, so they become responsible for that desk. Erase boards if you have used them, etc., always leaving classroom in the same orderly fashion in which you found it. Please notify the RE coordinator if any accidental mishaps should happen to occur in any classroom or if there are other concerns. Cleaning Supplies are located in the supply closets in each building. Classroom floors are cleaned nightly by a cleaning service, but **please clean up any glue, spills, crumbs, etc. from desks or tables.**

**NO SNACKS OR DRINKS ARE ALLOWED IN THE LAKE SCHOOL BUILDING. Snacks are discouraged unless connected to the lesson or a special occasion in the King building and then all spills, crumbs etc. are to be cleaned up and napkins, cups, etc. disposed of properly.**

**SUPPLIES**

Catechists will have an opportunity to select any supplies needed to keep in your bins with your books. At any time you need a refresher or additional supplies please fill out a supply request form found on the St Thomas RE Website [http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html) and scroll down to *“Resource Request”* or contact the RE Office via email re@stthomascl.church . The supplies will be delivered to you for the next class.

**DISMISSAL PROCEDURE**

To facilitate an orderly dismissal, Catechists are asked not to dismiss students before the scheduled end of class. Catechists in the early childhood program thru grade 1 will receive notices from parents regarding their child’s dismissal (who will be picking child up at classroom, etc.). Catechists may also escort them out of the school building to courtyard so there will be better supervision as students meet parents. Please contact the RE Coordinator if a student has not been picked up by parent/guardian in a timely fashion.

**FIRE DRILL PROCEDURES**

We will have a Fire Drill at the beginning of the school year. Fire procedures are posted in each classroom near the entrance door. \**Please take time to familiarize yourself with these procedures.*

**Specific directions regarding our Fire Drill procedures will be available at the catechist Kickoff/Orientation.**

**BABYSITTING**

Babysitting service is provided for the Catechists/Aides in the Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon classes. You may drop your child off 15 minutes before class and pick up by **6:00 pm.**

**SUBSTITUTES**

In the event of teacher absence, the aide or co-teacher would take responsibility for the class. *We are required to have two adults per classroom for safety.* If you will be unable to attend class, *PLEASE CONTACT US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE*. We hope to have a list volunteer substitutes available within the first few weeks of class to help out. If you know a parent from your own class that would be willing to help out, please let us know. We will contact the parent to complete the required diocesan forms.

**V COMMUNICATION**

**MAILBOXES**

Plan to stop at the Parish Center prior to going to your classroom. There will be times that you will find useful information on the display board in the reception area. We will be making an effort to send information electronically when possible. There is limited space in the mailbox area and taking your reading material to your classroom is advisable.

**ALWAYS CHECK YOUR MAILBOX FOR HANDOUTS, UPDATES, ETC.**

There will be a Message Center with slots for extra forms, etc. and sign out of equipment located by the Teacher Mailboxes(located in the parish center across from reception).

**TEACHERS’ REQUESTS**

**Please try to look ahead in your lessons to give the RE department ample notice.** If the items you need are not available we need time to purchase them for you. If you need Movie//book/game from our library please be specific on the topic. Names of all available movies, book and games can be found on on the St. Thomas RE website. [http://www.stthomascl.church/re/catechist](http://www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/catechist.html) Scroll down to “Classroom Resources**”**for a complete up to date list of all resources available. Please contact us at re@stthomascl.church or visit the RE office to take a look through our inventory. Electronic submissions are preferred due to the hectic nature of class times.

**CATECHIST MAGAZINE**

These publications will be available to you on a rotating basis. You will find useful information/tools in this magazine. After reading, please circulate via the mailbox system to the next person on the list, crossing off your name after completion.

**PRIEST VISITS**

Parish priests are most willing to visit your classes. You can send an email request to the RE department. Please give ample notice.

**VI SPECIAL EVENTS**

**PRAYER SERVICES**

The RE program strives to offer many different prayer and worship experiences. They will be held throughout the school year. Catechists and parents will be notified in advance.

**RECONCILIATION SERVICES 2019-20**

Reconciliation Services scheduled in the coming year are:

Grades 3 & 4 DATE: TBA

Grades 5 & 6 DATE: TBA

**EUCHARISTIC ADORATION**:

Grades 2—6 DATE: February TBA

**FIRST RECONCILIATION RETREAT - YEAR 2 - Pierson St. Church**

During a class session in November 4:30 pm - 5:45 pm

**FIRST RECONCILIATION – YEAR 2 - Oak St. Church**

Thursday, November 14, 2019 6:30 pm

Monday, November 18, 2019 6:30 pm

**FIRST COMMUNION RETREAT - YEAR 2 - Pierson St. Church**

April 28/29, 2020 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

**FIRST COMMUNION REHEARSALS - Oak St. Church**

YOU MUST ATTEND THE REHEARSAL FOR YOUR MASS

Friday, May 1

10am Mass - 4:30 pm

Noon Mass - 5:30 pm

**FIRST COMMUNION MASSES - YEAR 2 - Oak St. Church**

Saturday, May 2, 2019 10:00 am & 12:00 pm

 **A Catechist’s Prayer**

Father of all families, you have called me to serve the

family in truth and love as a catechist.

May I be faithful to this call, rooted in your Word,

and open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

May I use these gifts, especially the gifts of faith,

hope, and love, to serve the family as a witness to you,

who are love and life and the source and destiny of all families.

Let your Spirit enlighten my mind and strengthen my heart

so that I can be a path of Christ’s love to families,

especially those in need, the homebound and aged,

the disabled and disheartened.

Through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, I pray

for the Church, the Bride of Christ, whose mission to

build a civilization of love passes through the family. Amen.

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**Inspirational Thoughts**

We are not the sum of our weakness and failures: We are the sum of the Father’s love for us. -*Saint John Paul II*

Feed your faith and all your fears will starve to death. - *Unknown author*

Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work. *-John Trainer, M.D.*