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Catechetical  
Program  
Parent Handbook

St. John Vianney Parish  
Colonia, NJ

Dear Parents/Guardians,

On behalf of our catechists, aides and office staff of the Catechetical Program of St. John Vianney Parish, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share the faith of our Church with your children. We are humbled by the trust you have placed in us and pray that we will be effective instruments in spreading the Gospel.

After you have read this Handbook, please sign and date the Acknowledgement, and return it with your child. For those of you with more than one child, please return the acknowledgement with your oldest child.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mary Cowan  
Parish Catechetical Leader

## Mission Statements - Parish

In the spirit of St. John Vianney's zeal and concern for people, we are a community proclaiming the Gospel in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. The community of St. John Vianney strives to utilize the gifts and talents of each parishioner to create a vibrant welcoming parish. Through our liturgies, ministries, and organizations, we encounter Christ and are empowered to bring Him to the world.

## Catechetical Program

Having been anointed as priest, prophet and king when we were baptized, and united in our belief in a God who is love, we respond to his command to love one another. Always and everywhere, we endeavor to transmit by teaching and by the witness of our lives, the teaching and life of Jesus Christ.

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Roman Catholic Catechetical Program offered by St. John Vianney Parish. Our catechists are faithful to and teach the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Our text books rely extensively on teachings as set forth in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The materials we will be using this year have been updated for the new Roman Missal that we will begin using for Mass during Advent this year. We use Diocesan programs for the training of our catechists.

The St. John Vianney Catechetical Program is an eight-year program, beginning in grade one and continuing through grade eight. We encourage each child to begin catechetical instruction in first grade, and continue each successive year through eighth grade. We will work with parents and children to facilitate transfers into and from the St. John Vianney program to ensure continuity in the catechetical instruction of each child.

## Parental Involvement

You, the parents, are the primary educators of your children. Our Catechetical Program is intended to supplement and complement the formation *you* provide. The lessons you teach your children by the example of your lives have a profound effect on your children.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source form which all its power flows.” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10) Each week we gather for Mass. We offer thanks and praise. We hear God’s word and are nourished by Christ’s body and blood in Eucharist. We cannot emphasize enough how essential it is for us to come together for Mass each week. Our catechists will never cease to talk to your children about regularly coming to and participating in Mass. Just as we expect your children to regularly attend weekly classes, we expect them to regularly participate in weekly Mass. We hope and expect you accompany your children when they come to weekly Mass.

Let your children see you taking time to pray. Pray with your children. Volunteer to help in the community or the parish. Help an elderly or sick relative or neighbor.

Remember, the example of your life is their primary teacher. If your children see you living as an active Catholic your role model will go a long way toward assisting the children connect what they are learning in class to life.

# Curriculum

## **All Grades:**

What the Church Believes and Teaches -

Age appropriate faith formation on what the church believes, what the church teaches, how and what we celebrate, what it means to follow Jesus, and Catholic prayers and devotions.

## **Grade 1**

In addition, children will learn:

The Sign of the Cross  
The Our Father  
The Hail Mary

## **Grade 2**

In addition, children will learn:

Act of Contrition  
Grace Before Meals  
Glory Be to the Father

## **Grade 3**

In addition, children will learn:

Apostle's Creed

## **Grade 4**

In addition, children will learn:

The Nicene Creed  
The Beatitudes and Works of Mercy  
The Five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

## **Grade 5**

In addition, children will learn:

Holy Days of Obligation  
The Ten Commandments  
The Five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

## **Grade 6**

Focus of this grade is to walk through the bible to understand the story of salvation history and how it all points to the coming of Jesus as the messiah.

## **Grade 7**

In addition, children will learn:

The Rosary  
The names of the Apostles  
The Five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary  
The Stations of the Cross

## **Grade 8**

In addition, review of all prayers and devotions learned previously.

# Curriculum (Continued)

Every grade (age appropriate)

- Family Life Program addressing: family living, personal growth, self-understanding, respect for life, Catholic Christian sexuality, social living
- Liturgical year
- Lives of Saints
- Sacramentals

## Publishers of Texts

Grades 1 -5 and Grades 7 and 8 Pflaum Gospel Weeklies

Grade 6: Sadlier

All Grades: Family Life, RCL/Benziger

The foundation laid in each grade level is necessary for a child to advance to the next level, much as is the case an academic program. Just as a parent would not withdraw a child from Math class once he or she has learned to add and subtract, assuming the child can just pick up with Algebra later on, a parent should not withdraw a child from the Catechetical Program after the child has received First Communion, assuming the child can later just “pick up” with Confirmation preparation. Living the Catholic Faith requires far more than a child can be given or can grasp in first and second grade!

The Catechetical Program is not intended to be, nor should anyone have an expectation, that it is strictly a Sacramental Program. Any assumption that a child can skip two, three, four or more years and just register in time for Confirmation is severely flawed. As explained in the “Welcome” section, the Program is an *eight-year program*, beginning in first grade, and continuing each successive year through eighth grade. Thus, a child who has not attended classes appropriate to certain grade levels cannot be later placed in an age appropriate grade level. Attending each successive year is the *best* way to foster growth in lived faith. Let’s work together to give each child the best.

## Additional Programs

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), as adapted for children and special needs classes are available, as needed.

RCIA is an acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is a faith journey. It is a journey for persons who have perhaps never been baptized, or who maybe were baptized as Catholic or in another Christian tradition, but for whatever reason were not confirmed and have not received First Communion. At the completion of the journey, they receive the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, for those not previously baptized, and Confirmation and First Communion. If you or someone you know is interested in the RCIA, for an adult or a child, please let us know.

Our Special Needs Program is offered to address one of the basic tasks of catechesis - to initiate into the life of the Church community. How important it is that we do not isolate or somehow exclude a child who may have special needs. When we speak of special needs we are speaking of a child who may have learning or developmental disability or a physical disability. In the document *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities* we read that “Persons with disabilities, especially children, are particularly beloved of the Lord and are integral members of the Christian community.” If your child may benefit from this program, please let us know.

## Sacramental Preparation

We will provide specific information pertaining to preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation to the parents of children preparing for these Sacraments. Parents are given information with the dates and times for parent meetings during which the policies for the Sacraments will be discussed and information distributed. Just as parents are expected to attend a class before a child is baptized, parents are also expected to attend a “class” that we call a Parent Meeting before a child receives the Sacraments of Penance, First Communion or Confirmation. Why? Because it is important for you to be a living example of what we do with your children on Mondays or Thursdays. Penance is not just about *First* Penance. Communion is not just about *First* Communion. These are *repeatable* sacraments. They are essential for growing in holiness. Confirmation is not just about the day the Bishop comes. It is about a *living* our profession of faith. While we appreciate the challenges work schedules may present we expect parents to make the necessary arrangements so they can attend the applicable meetings.

## Homework

Assignments are given as a means to reinforce classroom lessons. Just as you take time to review your child’s assignments in his or her academic program, we encourage you to be involved with the assignments given in catechetical classes.

For those in the Confirmation Program the weekly homework assignment is coming to Mass and completing the assignment concerning Mass. And as *your* homework, we ask you to sign the assignment each week.

## Protecting the Children

A Police Officer is on the premises during the times classes are in session. In addition, there is a receptionist at the desk who will stop everyone seeking to enter the building while children are in the building. If you need to come to the Office to pick up a child before the usual time for dismissal you will be required to stop first at the reception desk to sign in. Similarly if you are dropping off a child after classes have begun, you will be asked to stop at the reception desk before proceeding to the Catechetical Office. We will escort children to and from the classroom, as appropriate. After first stopping at the reception desk you may then proceed to the Catechetical Office which is the first office on the left. Parents may *not* proceed into the hallways to go to a classroom unless we have given express permission. Any adult, parent or otherwise, who violates this rule will be trespassing and will be escorted from the premises by the Police Officer.

We also need to be aware of the safety of our children before and after classes. The parking lot can be a particularly dangerous place with many cars jockeying for position to drop off or pick up. Stop and wait. The safety of our children is key.

## Dealing with Allergies

There are a number of students in the St. John Vianney Catechetical Program who have severe and potentially life threatening allergies to peanuts, tree nuts and other foods. Because of these life-threatening food/drink allergies, we cannot allow edible treats of any kind. Snacks, candy, gum, food and drinks of any kind are **not permitted** during classes on Monday or Thursday evenings. This includes holiday or end of the year parties. We want to enforce a safe environment for all children in our parish. Our catechists are aware of potential health threats and will not permit snacks and drinks to be eaten or shared in our classrooms.

Exception: If your child has a medical condition that would require him or her to have a snack, please send a note to the Office. Provide the child's name and grade, specify the condition and indicate the nature of the food or drink he or she needs to bring.

## Attendance

When your child will be absent, please call our office before the scheduled class time (732-388-1424). If you get our voice mail, please leave a message with the name of the child, grade level and briefly state the reason for the absence. We will call you if we do not receive a call from you prior to the start of class.

Even though you have called us, or we called you, please send a note with your child the following class session to explain the reason for the absence.

Illness, injury, and emergency situations such as a death in the family, are considered excused absences.

**Please note: There are only 3 unexcused absences allowed per year.**

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please make every effort to bring your child to class on time.

Monday Classes                      Grades 1 – 8: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm

Thursday Classes                      Grades 1 - 8: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm

## Emergency Closing Information

The following rules will apply in the event of inclement weather:

- If the local public schools are closed due to weather, the catechetical classes scheduled for that evening will be closed.
- If the local public schools have an early dismissal due to weather, the catechetical classes scheduled for that evening will be closed.

Notice of cancellation will be broadcast on WCTC radio (1450 AM). A recorded message will be provided on the Catechetical Office phone line (732-388-1424)

## Early Dismissal

If your child must leave class prior to the scheduled conclusion you must send a note advising us of the time the child will be picked up and the name of the parent or guardian who will pick the child up. No child will be dismissed until first signed out in the Catechetical Office.



## Program Fee

A Program Fee is payable for each child. If payment of this fee would be a hardship, please contact the Parish Catechetical Leader. A late fee is charged for registrations after the close of the registration period.

## Records

It is essential that our records be up-to-date. In the event of any change in information such as phone or mailing address please contact the Catechetical Office as soon as possible. If you have an email address, please share it with us. It is imperative that we have correct emergency contact information.

## Student Code of Behavior

Jesus taught us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Being a disciple of Christ is demonstrated by the way we show respect, courtesy and kindness to all. The support of parents/guardians in helping their children live God's law of love is expected. We will therefore enforce the following guidelines:

- Children/adults are expected to show respect for all persons in word and action.
- Children/adolescents must comply with the rules established by catechists in the interest of providing a good learning environment. Discipline is first and foremost, the responsibility of the catechist.
- Children/adolescents must do nothing that causes physical harm to themselves or others.
- Children/adolescents must not destroy, deface or remove property.
- Children/adolescents who repeatedly exhibit inappropriate behavior (in the judgment of the parish administration) may be asked to leave the program and should be provided an alternate method of religious education/formation.

## Parental Concern Form

To initially advise you of a concern concerning homework, attendance or discipline we will send a "Parental Concern Form" to your home. Please sign the form to acknowledge receipt and return it to the Catechetical Office. As appropriate, we will invite you to come for a meeting with the catechist and Parish Catechetical Leader.

## Progress Reports

Unlike a report card as is used in an academic program, Progress Reports do not seek to grade a child. Rather, the goal is to assess how well each child is progressing, to the extent that the progress is observable. Progress Reports will be distributed in January and must be signed and returned to the Catechetical Office. Progress Reports are maintained in each child's permanent record file.

## Dress Code

Students may wear clothing similar to that worn to school provided it is modest and reflects Christian values. Any student arriving wearing clothing determined to be improper will be kept out of class until such time as a parent arrives to provide appropriate clothing.

## Fire Drills

We will conduct at least two fire drills during the year.

## Child Abuse Policy

New Jersey Law requires us to immediately notify the Division of Youth and Family Services if a catechist or the Parish Catechetical Leader suspects a child has been abused.

## Impaired Driver

We will not send a child home with a driver who is visibly impaired. We will contact the emergency number to secure an alternate driver.

## Drugs

Drugs are never permitted on the premises. Any student found possessing drugs will be detained until the police have been notified.

## Crisis Management

The Catechetical Program follows the Crisis Management Plan established by St. John Vianney School. This plan addresses preparedness for traditional crises and emergencies such as fires, accidents as well as biological, radiological, chemical concerns and other terrorist activities. The plan includes procedures for explosions, bomb threats, violence, intruders, weapons and hostages.

## Contact Us

Mary Cowan, Parish Catechetical Leader  
Email: mcowan@sjvs.net

Maria Puerschner, Administrative Assistant  
Email: mspuerschner@sjvs.net

Office Phone: 732-388-1424

## Catechetical Office Hours:

The following Office Hours apply during the weeks when classes are in session.

Monday 11:00 am – 4:00 pm; 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Tuesday: 9:00 am – 12:00 noon; 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Wednesday: 9:00 am – 12:00 noon; 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Thursday 11:00 am – 4:00 pm; 5:00 pm -7:30 pm

Friday: 9:00 am – 12:00 p.m.

Other times, by appointment.

The following Office Hours apply during the balance of the year unless otherwise noted on our outgoing voice mail message. Particularly during the summer months, call the office first to make sure it is open.

Monday – Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Other times, by appointment.

## More Information

Visit our website for information about the Catechetical Program.

<http://www.sjvianney.com/catechesis/>

# Acknowledgement

Instructions: One Acknowledgement must be completed for each family. Please return it with the oldest child. List all children in your family attending our Program below.

Student Name	Grade
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I acknowledge receipt of the Catechetical Program Parent Handbook. I have read the Handbook and agree to abide by the policies set forth in the Handbook.

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_