

# Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Religious Education Family Handbook



**236 E. Main Street  
Maple Shade, New Jersey 08052**

## **PARISH STAFF**

Administrator.....Fr. Joel Wilson  
Associate Pastor.....Fr. Cesar Tolentino

Director of Religious Education.....Mrs. Sherri Hunkins  
PREP Assistant.....Mrs. Susan Obuchowski

## **OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION**

Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) 236 E. Main Street Maple Shade, NJ 08052  
(856)779-7529 ext. 223      [shunkins@olphparish.com](mailto:shunkins@olphparish.com)  
ext. 228      [sobuchowski@olphparish.com](mailto:sobuchowski@olphparish.com)

**Web Site:** <http://www.olphparish.com/> - click 'Religious Education' at the top of the screen for the menu.

**Office Hours:**      Monday: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM      Tuesday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
Wednesday: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM, 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM      Thursday: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Friday: 9:00 AM -12:00 PM

## **PREP SCHEDULE**

Grades 1 through 7      Wednesday      6:00 PM - 7:15 PM  
Grades 8      Wednesday      7:30 PM - 8:30 PM

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES**

The Religious Education Program of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish acknowledges that children learn about God primarily within the family. With our families, we hope to participate in the transmission of Gospel values and in fostering a vibrant faith in each child.

We strive to provide our support and guidance so we can assist each other in this task, as it is our belief that parents and catechists are partners in the formal religious education process for our children.

### **Traditional Program**

- Grades 1- 7
- Classes meet weekly, Wednesday evening, 6:00 pm to 7:15 pm, September through May.
- In addition to classroom lessons, children participate in liturgical celebrations, outreach, safe environment and family life lessons.
- There will be a scheduled Family Mass for each each grade level, twice a year, that must be attended by the students and at least one adult.

### **Confirmation Program**

- Grade 8
- Classes meet weekly, Wednesday evening, 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm, September through April.
- In addition to classroom lessons, children participate in liturgical celebrations, outreach, safe environment and family life lessons.
- There will be a scheduled Family Mass for each each grade level, twice a year, that must be attended by the students and at least one adult.
- Attendance is also expected at a Confirmation retreat day.

### **Home Program**

- Grades 3 - 6
- Children who are unable to attend either the summer or fall program, may register for the Home Program with the approval of the pastor and Director of Religious Education. Parents teach lessons with children at home. Support materials are provided by the PREP Office and Sadlier Religion Publishers. Unit Assessments are given to students participating in the home Program.

### **Summer Program**

- Grades 3 -7
- A 33-hour, 2 week program, held the first two weeks in July, beginning the Monday after July 4th.
- Classes are held from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, Monday - Friday.

- Students **Must** attend both weeks. There are no absences.
- There is **No** Home Study, nor any make-up classes.
- Each student must attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the twice a year Family Mass for each child in each grade level, and 3 other gatherings to complete the requirements. Gatherings to be announced.
- In addition to classroom lessons, children participate in liturgical celebrations, outreach, safe environment and family life lessons.

We believe that in participating in the life of our parish community through prayer, sacraments and worship at Sunday Mass, our children will learn to live conscious and active Christian lives.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

### **Arrival**

All students enter the school building by the main entrance, adjacent to the rectory, at the top of the steps. Parents may walk their first and second graders to their classrooms. All other students enter the building and go to their assigned classrooms. Students are not permitted to enter a classroom before the Catechist is present.

### **Attendance- Absentee Policy**

Regular and continuous attendance at class is essential for a child's continuing faith formation. Parents are asked to report all student absences by either calling the PREP Office: (856)779-7529 ext. 223 or emailing: [shunkins@olphparish.com](mailto:shunkins@olphparish.com). Children must be free of fever and stomach ailments for 24 hours before returning to class. An Outline of the weekly lesson plans are on the parish website, and parents are asked to cover any missed lessons at home. Please have your child hand in the completed work the following week.

If a child misses more than three classes the DRE will assess the child's readiness to receive a Sacrament and/or their readiness for advancement to the next year.

A calendar for the year is found on the Parish Website ([www.olphparish.com](http://www.olphparish.com)) under the Religious Education, PREP tab. We also ask that you check your email frequently for any changes to this calendar that may arise.

Attendance at the weekly Sunday Liturgy is the most important way that you as parents can form your child in the Catholic faith. Weekly attendance at PREP classes and weekly participation in the Liturgy are both necessary to enable children to flourish in their faith. As a reminder, all families registered in PREP should be registered in OLPH Parish. Envelopes must be used as proof of attendance at weekly Mass.

### **Behavioral Expectations**

Students are to behave in a manner that fosters Christian values at all times, demonstrating respect for and working cooperatively with adults and other students. Furthermore, students should actively participate in classroom activities and discussions. They are to attend class regularly; complete any

assignments or homework; bring textbooks to class; and treat those textbooks respectfully and not deface them in any way. (A fee of \$25 will be charged for a replacement book.)

All students are expected to participate respectfully and actively in the faith learning experiences of PREP. If a child's behavior disrupts the learning process, the following steps will be taken:

- At the first incident, the child will be reminded of expected behavior and the consequences of misbehavior.
- After the second incident the child will be sent to the Office. If this inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be sent to the DRE and a parent will be contacted for a conference.
- If the disruptive behavior continues, it may be necessary to discuss alternate solutions with the Pastor.
- In addition to protecting the feelings and rights of others, we must also respect school property. While the school does belong to the Parish, the contents of each classroom desk belong to a child enrolled in OLPH School. If a PREP student takes or vandalizes someone's belongings, he or she must take responsibility for the damage done. If the damage is significant, parents will be asked to replace what has been taken or vandalized.

At no time should anyone sit at or remove anything from a teacher's desk. The white boards mounted in each classroom may only be used under the guidance of a Catechist and only for classwork.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones are to remain out of sight. If a student is texting or using his/her personal phone for any reason, the phone will be confiscated, and a parent will have to retrieve it from the DRE. This is nonnegotiable.

### **Communication**

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please share them with your child's Catechist or call the PREP office. We welcome and encourage communication between the Catechist, parents, Pastor, and DRE.

### **Curriculum**

We use the **We Believe** series, published by Sadlier. This series embraces the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: CREED, LITURGY and SACRAMENTS, MORAL LIFE, and PRAYER. The series uses a three-step catechetical process: We Gather - We Believe - We Respond. This echoes Jesus' pedagogy of faith: gathering his disciples into community, teaching them, and inviting them to respond. Additionally, each grade level has seven seasonal chapters that help children understand and live the liturgical year. In seventh grade and eighth grade, we introduce the text Confirmed in the Spirit.

- Grade 1 GOD: Introduces the children to our relationship with God, and invites them to know God through the Holy Trinity.
- Grade 2 JESUS: Presents the life of Jesus and celebrates the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.
- Grade 3 CHURCH: Conveys the good news of Jesus proclaimed in the life of the Church and the Body of Christ, while examining their faith as members of a community.

- Grade 4 MORALITY: Encourages the living of a Christian life in harmony with the Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Works of Mercy. Provides models of living in stories of Jesus, the saints, and other members of the Christian community.
- Grade 5 SACRAMENTS: Focuses on the sacramental experiences of ritual and symbol and the centrality of the Paschal mystery.
- Grade 6 SALVATION HISTORY: Presents the Scriptures as the story of God and humans, from creation to the coming of the kingdom in fullness..

Parents are welcome to visit the Sadlier website at <http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/> to learn more and to see the available resources.

For Confirmation preparation in Grades 7 and 8, **Chosen: 'Your Journey Toward Confirmation,'** a DVD-based series published by Ascension Press is used. The focus of 'Chosen' is to help children understand the purpose of Confirmation as it pertains not only to their sacramental preparation during the year, but also as it relates to a lifelong journey of faith as disciples of Christ. Parents are encouraged to review this program by going to the website at <http://confirmationstudy.com/about/tour/>.

**RCL Benziger Family Life Program.** This series, mandated for inclusion in Religious Education programs in our Diocese by Bishop O'Connell, is a part of the commitment of the Diocese of Trenton to the child protection standards set by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The focus of this series is on understanding ourselves as creations of a loving God, respect for self and others, and moral development. The units for each grade are on the following topics:

- God's Gift of Family
- God's Gift of Self
- God's Gift of Life
- God's Gift of Love
- God's Gift of Community

'Family Life' lessons will be taught in the classroom during the month of January.

### **Dismissal**

Students will be dismissed only to adults who are indicated on registration forms. Any changes in dismissal must be provided in writing by the parent. ALL students in grades one and two are required to be picked up at the classroom by an authorized adult. If someone else has your approval to take your child home, written permission must be given to the Catechist. This includes carpools and grandparents.

Parents of children in Grade 1 and 2 may enter the building at 7:10 pm to pick up your child from class. Please keep in mind that the children are in class until 7:15 pm. The catechist will open the classroom door when they are ready to dismiss the children.

Grades 3 through 8 will dismiss into the courtyard by the main entrance of the school.

**Dress Code:** It is expected that all students will dress appropriately when attending religious education classes. Any student who comes to class dressed inappropriately will be sent to the DRE's office and a parent will be called to bring a change of clothes.

**Early Dismissal** - Parents are to send a not indicating request. Parent/authorized adult reports to main entrance to pick up child.

Students are not to open outside doors for anyone. Doors are locked 10 minutes after classes begin and are unlocked 10 minutes before the end of class. In the interest of safety, only doors that are manned by a volunteer will be open for parents and students to enter the building. If we do not have volunteers to serve as monitors, only the Main PREP entrance (adjacent to the rectory-located at the top of the steps) will be used.

### **No Food in the Classrooms**

Food is never allowed to be consumed during PREP. Many of our students have allergies and keep EPI pens in the PREP Office. Also, several children who attend school here during the day have severe allergies, so certain rooms have been declared as “clean rooms.” Consequently, food is never to be brought to or eaten during PREP classes. Gum is not allowed in the school.

### **Registration and Re-registration**

- Registration for September classes begins in June and continue over the summer months. All information must be updated when re-registrations are completed.
- The registration fees and sacramental expenditures (for First Eucharist and Confirmation) are due at the time of registration. At this time, payment must be by check or cash; we are not set up for credit card payment. Baptismal certificates are required for all new registrants.
- Any student who is transferring from another Religious Education Program must present a letter of transfer showing attendance and the dates of sacraments received.
- It is the parent’s duty to inform the office of any court order limiting the rights of a parent. A certified copy of such order is to be submitted directly to Mrs. Hunkins.
- Children are expected to attend religious education classes for eight years. Home study is permitted for two years in Grades 3, 4, 5, or 6 (Grades 1 and 2 and 7 and 8 are Sacramental preparation years; therefore, home study is not permissible).

### **Safety Procedures**

The safety and well-being of the children you have entrusted to us is of primary importance. We follow the same guidelines mandated for public and private schools in New Jersey. We will practice procedures throughout the year for fire, lockdown, and shelter in place. Students are instructed not to use their cell phones during drills or actual incidents. We need to control the situation and the response as much as we can. We also ask parents not to call their children directly or the PREP Office during a drill or actual event. Information will be conveyed via the website or email when we are able.

We are also responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of each individual child, as outlined by the Trenton Diocese Department of Child and Youth Protection. To provide a safe environment for the children and youth in religious education programs, we are mandated to implement the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This involves criminal background screenings (fingerprinting) and training certification programs that advance the safety of our children (VIRTUS and RCL Family Life).

## **Volunteers**

All Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catechists, aides and substitutes are volunteers. Each year approximately 30 faith-filled individuals of all ages and professions offer their time and talent so that our children learn what it means to be Catholic.

In order to be a volunteer in PREP, an individual must complete an Application and Code of Conduct, which is kept on file in the PREP Office.

For every volunteer over the age of 18, the Diocese of Trenton requires a criminal background check. Even if the candidate has been fingerprinted previously for a job or other volunteer activity, he/she must be (re)fingerprinted with the correct documentation from the Diocese. If the candidate passes the background check, he/she will be issued a badge from the Diocese; this badge is to be worn at all times when in the building.

Furthermore, every volunteer over the age of 18 must also attend a VIRTUS training session, which addresses appropriate and inappropriate behavior toward children. The Diocese also recommends that every Catechist be “certified.” This process comprises two components: Methodology (live classes) and Theology (online sessions).

The strength of our program is dependent upon dedicated volunteers. We invite all parents to give serious consideration to participating in this important ministry. Tuition is waived for all Catechists.

## **Weather Emergency**

If local schools are closed due to an emergency weather situation, PREP classes will be cancelled.

If you have any questions about cancellations, please check the Parish Website ([www.olphparish.com](http://www.olphparish.com)).

Also, if the decision to cancel is made during the day, local schools will be asked to announce PREP cancellation and emails will be sent to each family.

A “School Closing” message will be left on the phone in the PREP Office (856-779-7529 ext. 223 or 228).



**Feast Day: June 27th**

Mother of Perpetual Help, you have been blessed and favored by God.

You became not only the Mother of the Redeemer  
but the Mother of the redeemed as well.

We come to you today as your loving children.

Watch over us and take care of us.

As you held the child Jesus in your loving arms, so take us in your arms.

He who is mighty has done great things for you, and God's greatest fear is that,  
in time of temptation, we may fail to call out to you and become lost children.

Intercede for us, dear Mother, in obtaining pardon for our sins, love for Jesus,  
final perseverance, and the grace always to call upon you, Mother of Perpetual Help.

Amen.