

Queen of Peace

Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)
Parent/Student Handbook
2015 – 2016

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Hamilton, OH 45013
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Pastor: Fr. James Wedig
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Our Church Mission:

We are a people of faith who recognize the need to gather for prayer and the celebration of the sacraments; to support a strong religious education program and our parish school; to evangelize the weak in faith; to embrace the poor and needy; and to be patient and accept the differences which exist among us.

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) at Queen of Peace Catholic Church. I would like to thank you for enrolling your child in our catechetical program. We are grateful for the opportunity to assist you in your duty of passing on the Faith to your children. It is our mission to teach our young people the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church in all its breadth and authenticity. This is an effort, however, which will prove fruitless without your leadership and example. I therefore strongly encourage you to consider anew what role you can play in this most important process.

This Handbook was put together in an effort to assist you with Religious Education throughout the coming year. In the following pages, you will find program policies, contact information, emergency policies, and drop-off/pick-up instructions.

Given this great task, the whole religious education program would not be possible without the tremendous help of our volunteer catechists, aides, substitute teachers, and office helpers. I want to thank all of them for performing this most important task of helping to teach the Catholic Faith to our young people. They are not paid but willingly volunteer their time and energy. Please be kind to them and assist them with your support.

Queen of Peace Parish is here to assist you in the religious education of your children. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. Although we may not be able to accommodate your requests, we want to give you the opportunity to share your comments with us. Let us all work together to ensure that we faithfully pass on the Catholic faith to our children. When we come face to face with Our Lord after this life, may he reward our efforts and say to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Mrs. Cheryl Hunt

Coordinator of Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

Mary, Our Mother, Queen of Peace, and Model Catechist

We declare and offer up all of our efforts and endeavors to Mary our Mother, who was the model catechist and Christian. Mary was the first to receive the Good News of salvation at the Annunciation (Luke 1:26) and she fully embraced the mission entrusted to her by God.

She was the first to share the Good News of Christ with her cousin Elizabeth at the Visitation (Luke 1:39). Through her intercession, she inaugurated the public ministry of Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1). Throughout her life, she lived in perfect union with her Son, even suffering with Him as he hung on the cross (John 19:25).

She now enjoys the full fruits of the redemption, as she now lives body and soul with all the angels and saints in Heaven. And so we entrust all of our work to her Immaculate Heart, so filled with grace and the Holy Spirit, and we ask her to intercede for us so that the same Spirit will flow into our hearts. As the Queen of Peace, may she help us to fulfill this mission entrusted to us by God, as she so perfectly fulfilled hers.

Mary, Queen of Peace, Pray For Us!

Philosophy

Our Parish Religious Education Program is structured to provide catechetical instruction in the Catholic faith to all parish children who are attending non-Catholic schools. Parents, by word and example, teach their children from birth throughout life. At Baptism, the parent undertakes the responsibility of providing for their child's Christian formation. The Religious Education (RE) staff is here to assist parents in the spiritual formation and ongoing moral development of their child through a formal program of continuous religious education.

As in building any foundation, each grade level builds upon another. Any missed material (particularly by grade) leaves that building weaker. Untaught building blocks and unanswered questions of faith can become evident later in life, especially in times of need.

In our program, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills for each child to grow and mature in understanding, positive

attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith. We hope to deepen the faith and sense of belonging to the Catholic Church in our children, so that they will be moved to share their time, talent and treasure in the life of the Church, now and throughout their lives. We strive to assist children in committing themselves to a personal relationship with God characterized by a vigorous sacramental life, a lifelong pattern of prayer, Christian service, and growth in their understanding of the Catholic faith. This process is achieved with the collaborative efforts of our parish staff, catechists, parents, and students.

Committed to this active partnership between parish staff and families, we place our efforts with confidence in God's loving hands.

Administration

* The ultimate responsibility for all parish education programs lies with the Pastor.

* The PREP Coordinator directs the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP), acts as resource person to catechists, coordinates the sacramental preparation programs, and supervises the certification of catechists.

* Members of the parish community are encouraged to give input regarding the program or policies to the Pastor, the Education Commission members, or the PREP Coordinator.

Curriculum

Curriculum for Queen of Peace Parish Religious Education Program is set by the Pastor and PREP Coordinator according to the guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the USCCB.

About Our Program

Our aim is to encourage a living, explicit, and fruitful profession of faith through a systematic catechesis program for students in Kindergarten through grade 8 who are attending public schools. PREP will aid in deepening their faith through a greater understanding and knowledge of the person of Christ, as well as the implications of the Gospel for their lives. PREP provides the first steps in a lifelong process of formation, instruction, and insight. Instruction will include detailed formation concerning the topics of: Scripture, what we believe and why we believe it, forms

of prayer, the Mass, the Sacraments, preparation for the Sacraments, our Church and its history, morality, and faith experiences. PREP helps our young people to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.

Registration

PREP at Queen of Peace Parish offers two options for those attending. For the 2015-2016 school year, we will offer one session on Sunday mornings from 9:15-10:45am to make it easier for families who travel long distances to attend Queen of Peace. Finally, all students may attend the summer session at St. Aloysius to fulfill their classes as well.

We strongly encourage early registration for many reasons. This gives us more time to ensure that we are properly prepared to teach your children in our faith. We wish to ensure that we have enough resources (materials, classroom space, teachers, aides, textbooks, etc.). Depending on the number of children enrolled in classes, we may need to add catechists and aides and they would need to have background checks and go through various training.

Any changes to the registration information (i.e. status, phone numbers, e-mail and home addresses, insurance info, contacts info) should be reported to the PREP Coordinator as soon as possible.

Registration fees for 2015-2016 school year are as follows:

\$75.00 for one student

\$125.00 for two students

\$150.00 for three or more students in one family

*Fees are payable at the time of registration or the first Sunday of class and checks should be made payable to "Queen of Peace Church".

**We do offer financial assistance to anyone who has a need.

Decisions regarding financial aid are made by the PREP Coordinator in consultation with the pastor.

Homeschooling

Home-schooling families are encouraged and welcomed to participate in our Religious Education program, especially during the sacramental years. This is a wonderful opportunity to foster a sense of community with the parish and interact with other

Catholic children in a controlled and caring environment. We especially invite our home-school parents to share their knowledge of the Catholic faith and teaching skills as catechists and aides in our religious education department.

Non-discrimination Policy

Queen of Peace Parish Religious Education Program admits students of any sex, race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to program participants. It does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national origin.

Non-Custodial Parent's Rights

The custodial parent needs to inform the catechist and the Coordinator of Religious Education in writing of the rights of the non-custodial parent especially in regards to the dissemination of information and release of the student.

Special Needs Students

Children/students with special learning needs are welcome and included in our programs. Parents are asked to indicate their children's special needs at registration time.

Volunteers

As Catholics, parents are the primary catechist or teacher of the faith. We are here to support you in this role, but you may also want to volunteer your gifts and talents to our program to be with your child and help others. There are many different ways in which you can contribute. For example, you can volunteer in the classroom as a catechist aide or a catechist, or help with special projects throughout the year. All parents who are catechists, co-catechists, or catechist's aides are able to send their children to PREP for free. All volunteers must have the Virtus class and fingerprinting before beginning. Please contact the PREP Coordinator to obtain a form for fingerprinting.

General Policies

Visitors

All Visitors, including parents/guardians, must report to the School Office during program hours to drop off or pick up a child, other than normal arrival/dismissal time. A visitor is not permitted to go to any classroom without permission from the PREP Coordinator.

Arrival

The doors of the school will be open at 8:50am. In order that we might provide adequate supervision for the health and safety of each child, we ask that you do not drop off your child earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of class. Until there is an adult present in the classroom, students are expected to wait quietly outside the door to their classroom. Parents are encouraged to drop their children off at the front school entrance. Volunteers will be there to help children should they require assistance. However, parents are certainly permitted to park their vehicles and escort their children to their respective classroom. Only the front doors of the school building will be unlocked during class time. Please bring your child to class on time as tardiness is very disruptive for teachers and the other students.

Pick-Up

Drive-by pick up for K – 6 is not permitted. Please park your vehicle and personally escort your child out of the classroom. Children will not be allowed to leave their classroom unless a parent or legal guardian physically comes into the classroom to retrieve them. Older siblings younger than grades 7 & 8 may not pick up children in place of their parents. This policy has been adopted for liability reasons and to ensure the safety of our children. It also gives parents the opportunity to speak with catechists on an individual basis. Students should be picked up within the last 10 minutes of class ending. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call the school office at 513-863-8705 or Mrs. Hunt's cell phone at 513-869-9990.

Early Pick-Up

If it is absolutely necessary to pick up a child before dismissal, parents wishing to pick their child up early from class will need to go to the main office to sign out their children. All children K - 8 must be signed out by a parent or legal guardian or parent designate. The respective child will be brought to the front office by a volunteer. For security reasons, only PREP volunteers are allowed in the hallways during class times.

Late-To-Pick-Up

Children not picked up at the normal dismissal time, will be escorted to the front office. Parents must come to the main office to pick up their child. If the child is left at school beyond 15 minutes after the session has been dismissed, a call will be made to your home and then your cell phone (if the number has been provided). If there is no response, the call will be made to the emergency number you listed on your registration form. Please note that we cannot release your child to anyone but you or your emergency contact. Each family must have current emergency release information on file with the program. Please be prompt to pick up your child shortly after our session is dismissed.

Religious Observance

The objective of our religious education program is not only to deepen one's knowledge about the Catholic Faith, but to inspire our students to live their lives a certain way. In particular, the ultimate aim is to encourage our students to PRACTICE their faith. Jesus tells his disciples very clearly in the gospel, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The third commandment obliges us to keep the Sabbath day holy. This means that parents and students are REQUIRED to attend Sunday Mass every week; only serious illness or an inability to be physically present where Mass is being celebrated serve as adequate excuses. Since God gives us 168 hours every week, certainly we can give one hour in return. This is extremely important as it serves as an example and encourages our children to practice their faith and to grow into adults with a mature Catholic faith.

Attendance

Good attendance is anticipated and necessary for continuity in the classes. An absence due to seriously inclement weather, illness, or family emergency is always a valid excuse. Please let your catechist know so the circumstances of the absence can be recorded. Please do not send a sick child to class. A parent will be contacted by phone or mail if no note is received after three consecutive absences. Sporting events are not valid excuses. Attendance is mandatory for students preparing to receive a Sacrament. If more than 20% of classes are missed by the

student the year of or before the intended Sacrament, they will not be permitted to receive the sacrament with his or her class.

Progress Reports

To encourage student accomplishment and accountability for learning, a student's achievement of basic learning objectives required for his/her grade level will be monitored throughout the year. A mid-term and end of year progress report will be sent to each student's parent/guardian.

Homework

Students are expected to complete all homework assignments. As in all other subjects, the purpose of homework is to reinforce the material taught and to prepare the student for the upcoming lesson. Making sure that all assignments are completed and even helping your students learn their material is one way of fulfilling your obligation as parents to pass the Faith on to your children. These homework assignments, quizzes, and tests are also used to assess the knowledge of the student to ensure that they understand the material and are ready for promotion to the next grade. When homework assignments are given, parents are expected to assist as well as supervise these assignments. Absence does not excuse anyone from homework. Please check with your catechist regularly for assignments, notices and calendar updates. It is expected that parents assist their children in remembering to bring their completed assignments, books and needed materials to class each week. If texts or materials become lost, the student will be required to purchase replacements.

Field Trips

Any activity involving transport off parish grounds requires advance parent notification and written permission from a parent/guardian ***before*** any student may participate in such an activity. A permission form will be sent home prior to such an activity.

Child Abuse

Queen of Peace follows the policies of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati regarding child abuse. Program administrators are required by the Ohio Revised Code and the *Archdiocesan Decree*

on *Child Protection* to report suspected or actual child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

Policy Changes

Parents will be notified in writing when policies are to be added or amended.

Sacramental Preparation

Grades 1 and 2 prepare a child to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. Grades 7 and 8 prepare our young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. These sacramental years are extremely important for a child's formation in the Catholic faith. Students are expected to faithfully attend weekly classes and complete all assignments and special requirements. Parents of students who habitually miss classes without a valid excuse up to or above 20% of their classes will be required to meet with the PREP Coordinator to determine if their child is ready to receive the respective sacrament that year or if they should be deferred to the following year. If your child must miss class, please send a note to the child's teacher explaining his or her absence.

Confirmation Requirements

Confirmation at Queen of Peace Parish takes place in the Spring of 8th grade with St. Aloysius Parish. There are a number of special requirements each student must fulfill before they can receive the sacrament of Confirmation. These requirements are explained at the beginning of the 8th grade year. We encourage parents to allow their children to decide for themselves if they truly want to receive the Sacrament, as it is a commitment to practice one's faith later in life. The preparation for the sacrament is a lot of work and should be undertaken for sincere reasons. Nobody should be confirmed simply because it is expected by the family. In addition, students and their parents should not see Confirmation as a type of "graduation". Rather, reception of the sacrament should be understood as a transition leading to one's own maturation in the faith. This maturation of the faith should be evidenced by a desire to witness to the Catholic faith through

one's words and actions. The young adult should understand the implications of this kind of witness in our increasing secular world. Once again, the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation should be freely made by each young person.

Sacramental Policy

The purpose of this policy is to stress the important relationship between living faith, Church affiliation and the sacraments, and to affirm our responsibility to receive the sacraments of the Church with the proper disposition.

Students intending to receive First Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation at Queen of Peace Church must be enrolled and participate in religious education classes through one of the following.

- Queen of Peace School
- Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) - 80% minimum attendance rate required
- Right of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) - 80% minimum attendance rate required

Students must be enrolled for one (1) full year prior to receiving a sacrament and must complete all diocesan and parish requirements prior to receiving a sacrament.

Candidates and their families must be attending Sunday Mass regularly at Queen of Peace and be actively involved in parish life. Candidates for the sacraments must be baptized and fulfill all requirements of the Code of Canon Law.

Students transferring from another parish and entering Queen of Peace School or PREP for the first time during a sacramental preparation year will be required to show evidence of participation in a religious education program in their former parish and a basic understanding of Catholic belief and practice before being accepted for candidacy for a sacrament. Should they fail to show appropriate evidence of knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith, prospective candidates will be expected to participate in special classes or individual tutoring as determined by the Prep Coordinator or Pastor.

Any candidate for a sacrament who did not enroll and participate in religious education classes for one (1) full year prior to

receiving a sacrament will have the reception of the sacrament postponed until preparation is completed, as determined by the Prep Coordinator or Pastor.

Students whose parents decide to provide formal religious education in a home-based manner are to follow the **Guidelines for Home-Based Religious Education** as well as the **Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs and Forming Young Disciples**. (These documents are available through the Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.)

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Illness/Injury

All students registered in the PREP Program must have a completed Medical Release form on file (available upon registration). In the event of a serious medical situation, local emergency medical personnel will be contacted and every attempt will be made to contact the parent/guardian.

Fire/Severe Weather

Students are verbally instructed at the beginning of the year as to emergency procedures for fire and threatening weather.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, you will receive a phone call or email from the church notifying you if classes are cancelled. You may also call 513-869-9990 to speak with Mrs. Cheryl Hunt, our PREP Coordinator, directly.

Child Safety Program

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Queen of Peace Parish wishes to ensure a safe environment for the education and protection of your children. For this reason, only PREP volunteers are allowed in the hallways during class times. In addition, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati requires that all PREP volunteers undergo background checks and take part in a Safe Environment Training Seminar

(VIRTUS). These are requirements of the archdiocese and will be **strictly** enforced. **All PREP volunteers MUST participate in a VIRTUS training seminar and a background check before they can participate.**

Discipline Policies

Student Conduct

Students are expected to cooperate in program guidelines and rules. They are expected by their behavior to make our classes a safe and positive experience. Guidelines are listed below.

1. Show respect to catechists, other students, and program personnel.
2. Treat the property, good name and physical safety of others with respect.
3. Under no circumstances will a student or an adult be permitted to strike another or use abusive language for any reason.
4. Students are to be present only in the areas of the building for which they have permission at a specific time.
5. Treat the property of Queen of Peace Church with respect.
6. Use of, or possession of, medications (without written note from parent), drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and weapons of any kind is strictly prohibited.
7. Short skirts, spaghetti strap tops, tank tops, sleeveless tops, the showing of any undergarments (bras, underwear), and clothing with inappropriate language or pictures will not be permitted.
8. Cell phones, iPods, or other electronic devices will not be permitted in class.

Disciplinary Steps

1. Verbal correction by the Catechist.
2. Removal from class - child sent to PREP Coordinator.
3. Follow-up phone call by the Catechist or PREP Coordinator.
4. Removal from class. Parents will be informed by phone and in writing of a student's removal. A parent/student/ catechist and PREP Coordinator conference will be arranged before the student will be allowed back into the classroom. The Pastor will be notified. The student's removal will be noted in the student's record.

5. Removal from program. Should the above steps go unheeded after a suitable probationary period, the PREP Coordinator will inform the student's parents of the decision to permanently remove the student from the program. The Pastor will be notified and the decision will be attached to the student's file.

6. The PREP Coordinator or Pastor retains the right to omit one or more of the above steps. The PREP Coordinator or Pastor retains the right to make exceptions to the disciplinary procedures based on the severity of the action.

Search and Seizure

Students are not permitted to possess tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, illegal drugs, or weapons of any kind. Staff members are required to investigate even the suspicion that such items are in the student's possession. If such items are found, they will be confiscated immediately. The student will be accompanied to the PREP Coordinator for disciplinary action.

Parish Organizations for Youth

Queen of Peace Youth Ministry: Grades 6-12th (currently inactive)

Activities are centered around learning and defending the faith, social justice, prayer, and social/fun activities. There is a junior high and a high school group. The groups meet most Sundays and Wednesdays, along with opportunities for retreats and other outings. Activities are listed in the parish bulletin or on the website. Information will be sent home about youth ministry to all students who are in the appropriate grades.

Catholic Youth Organization (CYO)

Parish youth are invited to participate in a number of sports activities. Announcements are regularly included in the church bulletin and notices are periodically sent home with registration information. QPAC organizes the youth sports program here at Queen of Peace.

Servers

Boys and girls, starting in grade 4, are invited to participate and are trained to be altar servers. Students may serve through high school. Please call the church office to sign up.

Liturgical Ministers

Confirmed students in high school may train to be lectors and/or Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Contact the Church Office to sign up.

Prayer Support

Although it may seem extremely difficult to inspire today's young people to know and practice their faith, we recognize the importance of entreating Our Lord that our endeavors may be successful. Therefore we seek your continued prayerful support. In particular, we pray that the efforts of our volunteers and staff may bear spiritual fruit in the lives of our young people and their families. Although there are many powerful forces in the world working against us, we know that with God all things are possible.

Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us!

