

Saint Michael's Religious Education

CATECHIST HANDBOOK

"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers,
and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are **witnesses**."
--Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Proclaiming the Gospel), 41

"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus
Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them;
I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day."
--Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of Evangelization), 3

**1125 St. Michael's Road
Mount Airy, MD 21771
410-489-7667**

“Go, therefore, and make disciples...”

The ministry of catechesis finds its origin in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ: “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations...and teach them to observe all I have commanded you.” (Mt. 28:18-19). Catechesis is a critical turning-point in becoming a disciple: Learning to observe Jesus' teachings is the first step in discipleship, and teaching others is the culmination of that gift. Congratulations on reaching this point in your faith journey!

Catechesis within the family is "irreplaceable" as it "precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 68). Parents are the primary educators of their children, and our Religious Education office supports parents through home study materials and in-class catechesis, as well as other special events. Our volunteer catechists are key to providing this support to parents, all of whom must call on the Holy Spirit who teaches us "all things" (John 14: 26) necessary to fulfill the Great Commission.

The ministry of catechesis is a sacred trust to be practiced in communion with the local bishop, who is the chief catechist of any diocese, and the pastor, who is responsible for directing and providing for parish catechesis. Parents, beginning with the example of their lives, are necessarily collaborators in passing on the faith. Parents at St. Michael's may enroll their children in home study or in-class Religious Education for the systematic approach that reinforces their day-to-day witness. Volunteer catechists make the in-class option possible.

The person who undertakes the ministry of catechesis is much more than what is understood to be a teacher. The catechist facilitates an ever-deepening encounter with God through knowledge, prayer, community support and faith sharing, and service. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the catechist is making disciples, who are followers of Jesus in every area of their lives.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (#85-86) lists the “fundamental tasks of catechesis” as:

- ✠ Promoting knowledge of the faith
- ✠ Liturgical education
- ✠ Moral formation
- ✠ Teaching to pray
- ✠ Education for community life
- ✠ Missionary initiation

All of these tasks are necessary and interdependent, just as the vital organs of the body are necessary and interdependent. These tasks also require the on-going formation and commitment of the catechist, as well as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish.

Vision

Because our ultimate goal is heaven – for ourselves and for all those we love – we evangelize! St. Michael Faith Formation program is ordered towards helping parents pass on the Faith of their families and to ensure that their children have the tools necessary to freely choose salvation. Guided by this goal:

1. Our parish Faith Formation program is offered at times that support families' attendance at Mass together.
2. We provide parents with Pflaum "Parent Pages" (up to Grade 6) or access to other online materials to help them reinforce at home what is discussed during class (Benzinger and Ascension Press online, grades 7 and higher).
3. We provide parents with additional resources and events that are available for parent and student enrichment in our RE Weekly Update emails and bulletin publications.
4. We prepare catechists to meet the challenging demands of effectively witnessing the faith in relevant, engaging, and inspiring ways.

Mission

St. Michael's assists parents in providing faith formation for their children in preschool through high school. We do so in accordance with the Archdiocese of Baltimore's *Bringing Good News* (2013). This faith formation is a life-long relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and the Church he founded. We develop this relationship through spreading the Gospel message; through prayer, the liturgy, sacraments, and service. This work is done within the context of the parish community and the family.

The Religious Education Office is also responsible for providing and supervising sacramental preparation for children and teens, up to age 18.

I. Catechists and Aides

Qualities of an Effective Catechist

Catechists share their personal faith testimony and their personal presence. The ability to share authentically requires certain qualities that include:

- ✦ Continual growth in one's own faith, especially through an awareness of God's activity in one's own life and vocation
- ✦ Commitment to (re-)learning and living ever more deeply the Church's teachings, traditions, and sacramental life
- ✦ Creativity, wonder, hospitality, and welcome
- ✦ Working knowledge of developmental and learning differences or willingness to learn as needed
- ✦ Generosity of spirit, respect for diversity, and a disposition open to faith-sharing
- ✦ Striving to communicate and collaborate with parents and RE staff

Professional Conduct

Even though all catechists, class aides, hallway and parking lot monitors, and nurse school providers who serve at St. Michael's are volunteers, they are representatives of the parish. As such, they have obligations and responsibilities toward the families they serve. All must abide by a Christian and professional code of conduct. Catechists are entrusted with particular knowledge and familiarity with persons and relationships. As such:

- ✦ Any information that is received or acquired about students and their families is confidential unless otherwise instructed.

- ✠ A child/teen's behavior or performance should not be discussed with anyone other than the DFF, ARE, or that child's/teen's parents. Any comments made about children/teens should be prudent and discreet, both in and out of the classroom. Conversations need to be held in a private setting.
- ✠ The DFF or ARE should be informed if there is an unusual need or difficulty with a child/teen. The catechist should not attempt to handle it alone.
- ✠ Catechists must report any suspected child abuse including neglect to the DFF and to the Howard County Dept. of Child Protective Services at 410-872-4203 (after hours, the police department 410-313-2929 or simply 9-1-1). If the reported abuse involves someone volunteering or working for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in any capacity, or if the abuse occurred on the premises or during an off-site church event, then a report should also be made to the AOB Office of Child and Youth Protection at 410-547-5348 or the Victim's Assistance Hotline at 1-866-417-7469.

Maryland's Department of Human Services defines child abuse as:

- Physical injury (not necessarily visible) of a child under circumstances that indicate that a child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed.
- The failure to give proper care and attention to a child, leaving a child unattended where the child's health or welfare is harmed or a child is placed in substantial risk of harm.
- An act or acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.
- Identifiable and substantial impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function.
- Finding credible evidence that has not been satisfactorily refuted that physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse occurred.

Communication from St. Michael's Religious Education Office

Information from the RE Office is sent by email. Catechists or Aides needing a paper copy or a phone call need to inform the staff.

When the RE office corresponds with all parents, we will CC catechists and aides for your information and so that you can reinforce the messages in the classroom. For example, the RE Weekly Update email will keep you informed of the many opportunities and events offered through our office, and it would be wonderful to have your support in promoting those events. Please make sure you're receiving these weekly updates – they come every Monday!

Approval of Catechetical Materials

The Archdiocese requires that all catechetical materials reflect the full content of the faith and be aligned with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Pflaum *Gospel Weeklies* (Pre-K through Grade 6) and Benzinger *Be My Disciples* (Grades 7-8) textbooks we use closely align with standards and indicators set out by the Archdiocese of Baltimore (AOB) for each grade level, and they are approved for use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Benzinger's *Family Life* series is required for Religious Education classes in the AOB in Kindergarten through Grade 8. Only send home the parent portion – the rest is supposed to be covered in class.

St. Michael's has designed a Bible Stories schedule for all grade levels through Grade 8, which helps our families pass on a wider knowledge of Scripture.

Materials on the resources page of this handbook have already been vetted by the DFF. All other materials must be vetted by the DFF before use in class.

Weekly Attendance

In general, catechists, co-catechists and class aides are expected to be present for class every week. If a catechist needs to be absent because of illness, business travel, or a personal reason, the DFF (Grades 6-High School) or the ARE (Pre-K to Grade 5) will find a substitute. Please give as much notice in advance as circumstances allow.

Parking, Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

- Parents must park and accompany younger children (Grade 5 and below) into the school building and to their classroom. Older children may be dropped off by the Religious Education doors.
- Parents must pick up their children in the school building and, for younger children (up to grade 5), in their RE classroom. Catechists may only release children to their parents or an adult explicitly authorized by the parents. The DFF or ARE will inform the catechist and aide of any custody situations or restrictions on who may collect the child.
- No one may ever park or “wait” in the fire lane – where the curb is painted red.
- No children (elementary or middle school) should be wandering the parking lot without their parents.

Class Size

Class size will be held within the maximum guidelines set by the Archdiocese of Baltimore*.

Pre-K	10 students per adult
Grades K – 2	18 students per adult
Grades 3 - 8	22 students per adult
Grades 9 - 12	25 students per adult

*Field trips and other activities require lower ratios, and we strive to achieve that, so that classes can make field trips around the campus often.

Attendance Sheet

Each class section has an attendance folder with an attendance sheet that is completed each session. This folder is also a way to pass materials between the RE office and the catechists.

The attendance sheet is a legal document. Please be sure to complete it carefully and thoroughly.

Under the appropriate date, place a checkmark next to the names of students who are present. If a child is absent, please write an "X" in the box. If a child is more than 15 minutes late, please write a "T" in the checkbox.

Important: *Do not add or delete any student from your class list* unless notified by the DFF (Grades 6 to High School) or ARE (Grades Pre-K to 5). If a student appears in your classroom and his/her name is not on your class list, please send him/her to the office immediately; younger children should be accompanied by a class aide.

If possible, the catechist should call or email the parents of any child who is absent more than two consecutive times to find out the reason for their not attending class. The DFF and ARE can help with this.

Communication with Parents

Catechists are asked to foster family involvement as much as possible. Please have children take their folders home each week with the weeks' Pflaum *Gospel Weekly* and/or other take-home pages.

Periodic written communication with parents is encouraged (every two weeks or every week, if possible). An introductory letter or email at the beginning of the year is very appropriate. Updates, reminders and announcements can be sent periodically, especially during sacramental preparation years. Please copy the DFF on emails to parents of children in any grade. Please also copy the ARE on emails to parents of children in preschool through grade 5. The RE office provides a list of emails for parents of your class section.

If the catechist is given information directly from the family involving such things as a chronic illness, an impending move or important family situation, the catechist should relay this information to the DFF or ARE. We will give you family information that is pertinent to teaching RE, if we have it, and we'll pass it on to your substitute teachers as the need arises.

If parents contact the DFF/ARE with a complaint about a catechist, the DFF will contact the catechist immediately to discuss the situation. The privacy of all parties will be protected as far as possible.

Catechists are asked to begin class on time. Children who arrive late are expected to enter without disrupting the class.

Assessments and Progress Reports:

It is important to assess the formation that is taking place in children and to offer feedback leading to further growth. A catechist can assess a child's progress by observing his/her participation in discussions, group work, and care for others. Catechists can also evaluate a child's verbal (oral and written) and nonverbal (drawn, crafted, etc.) expressions and responses.

Catechists prepare progress reports for children in grades 1-8 at the end of each semester (December and April) to offer feedback about individual children's behavior, class participation, and progress in *knowledge about* the faith. The RE office reviews these and sends the completed

reports to parents via email. A format and instructions will be emailed to you and may be emailed back to us.

II. Weekly Procedures

Preparation for Class

- † Catechists are expected to plan and prepare thoroughly for each lesson, including taking time to read the teacher's/leader's guide ahead of time, to pray and reflect on the lesson, and to consider how best to teach the particular group of learners.
- † **Any instructional materials other than Pflaum Gospel Weeklies (Pre-K to Grade 6), Benzinger *Be My Disciples* (Grades 7-8), Ascension Press's *Chosen for Confirmation Preparation*, Benzinger *Family Life*, Key Bible Stories, and AOB "tasks" must be approved ahead of time by the DFF.** This includes videos, handouts, etc.
- † Movies need to be covered under our CVLI license.
- † Copyright laws must be respected. All materials that are copied must fall within the scope of fair and legitimate use. The photocopying of an entire work to avoid the purchase of additional copies is outside of this scope. Check with the DFF if there are questions.
- † Catechists and class aides are expected to be present every week. Pairs of co-catechists may choose to team teach each lesson or alternate roles as lead catechist and class aide each week.
- † Plan "bell work", a lesson plan, and gentle ways to redirect children/teens so they can easily focus on the class work. Key Bible Stories might be good "bell work" so that children want to arrive early enough not to miss that great story!
- † Catechists and aides need to arrive in plenty of time to gather materials, to prepare the classroom, and to "check in" with (be seen by) the DFF or ARE.

Computer, DVDs, and Internet

Equipment is available to watch a DVD, stream a video from the FORMED website, or other. We need time ahead of class to set up the equipment and be sure it is working properly. Please contact staff in advance when you plan to use a computer, DVD, or internet. If possible, a week's notice is very helpful to us!

Name Tags and Seating Charts

Name tags (file labels) or name tents (cardstock to label a child's seat) are recommended, particularly during the first 4 to 5 weeks so that catechists can learn the name of each child in a large class. Catechists and aides should wear nametags or write their names on the white board so that students and parents become familiar with the adults in the class. Using a seating chart is helpful for separating students who behave better when sitting apart. **Do not hesitate to assign seats.** Update your class seating chart as needed throughout the year and save a copy in case you ever have a substitute.

Student Supervision

- Greeting children with a smile at the classroom door as they arrive sets the right tone for class and can go a long way toward positive interactions throughout the session.

- Be sure that everyone in the class feels loved and accepted. Be conscious of cliques, and be sure to gently open them so no one feels like an outsider. **One great predictor of success is if the child has made a friend in the first month.**
- **Never leave children alone in a classroom.** If assistance or materials are needed, send an aide or a trusted student (or pair) to the RE Office. Call the DFF or ARE at 240-437-3671 or 3673 (or use the ARE's cell phone number).
- Schedule stretch breaks or other movement into your lesson plan. A good rule of thumb is 20 minutes of instruction, then 1-2 minutes of movement. Younger children will need more frequent changes in activity.
- Field trips to the sanctuary, statue of Mary, or other sites on campus are encouraged. Field trips are a great way to break up the lesson and make a powerful point more memorable for children/teens. Be creative!
Safety point: The catechist or aide must have the emergency backpack, attendance folder, and a radio; make sure that RE staff know where your class is at all times and that you know how to use the radio.
- To help maintain interest, consider varying your classroom routine through writing, arts and crafts, media, other games and activities.
- Be sure to check your own work as a teacher by quizzing the class (verbal or written quizzes). Certain information may be entirely new and more difficult than you anticipated, or certain learners may need information presented a different way. Testing students' understanding means finding out what your class needs from you.

Discipline Policy

An atmosphere conducive to learning and growing in faith is necessary for fruitful catechesis. This is the heart of the discipline policy for RE. All catechists are encouraged to read *Discipline Made Easy: Positive Tips & Techniques for Religion Teachers* by Glavich; copies are available in the RE office.

For a loving Christian classroom environment, the catechist must set the tone and foster cooperation so that the message of Jesus Christ can be imparted and understood. Ideally each RE class is a small community where all participate fully and share their gifts.

Do not ever use corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is defined as “any touching that can be construed as punitive.” Even parents cannot authorize RE personnel to administer corporal punishment to their child in any way. See RE staff with questions or concerns about this.

Maintaining discipline is like removing obstacles in the path towards our goal of good catechesis. We learn how to remove and avoid these obstacles so that our destination can be reached. – Joseph Paprocki

Learning Disabilities and Behavior

Be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of your students. Be aware that learning difficulties and home problems are often the source of behavior issues. These can often give the catechist an

indication of how to handle a particular student or situation. Do not hesitate to ask for help from the child's parents and the RE staff.

The DFF or ARE will inform the catechist of any learning disability, medical condition, or other circumstance that could impact behavior. Information of this kind is strictly confidential.

Classroom Management

Catechists should always strive to maintain good classroom discipline with love. Be sure that every person is treating everyone else with respect and kindness. Be sure that expectations are clear and rules are enforced. Following a weekly classroom routine is very helpful for most learners.

Always be prepared for class. Have enough for the children to do and learn. Be ready with fun activities - appropriate to the topic of class - to fill in any unexpected gaps.

Do not let behavior get out of hand. This only leads to frustration for the catechist and for the children in the class. Please notify the DFF or ARE at the first signs of concern about a child's behavior. Even if you don't need advice or hands-on help, we need the information in case you have a substitute sometime.

Some helpful ideas for the new teacher:

- Scan the room as you teach.
- Use eye contact and be aware of your non-verbal communication.
- Use the child's name when you call on him/her.
- Reinforce good behavior.
- Assign tasks and responsibilities to learners.
- Move around the room as you are speaking and when learners are working individually or in groups.
- Sometimes a hand on the shoulder of a student helps them focus and calm down; other times, that triggers misbehavior. Don't be afraid to ask the parents or RE office for information! Every child is unique.
- Be firm, confident, and consistent.

During the Course of Class

It is very important that the DFF and ARE know where children are at all times. Please contact the DFF/ARE before conducting any activity outside of the classroom. Whenever the catechist takes the children out of the classroom, one adult is to be at the head of the line and another adult is to be last person in the line. No student should be allowed to run ahead of the lead adult or lag behind the last adult.

Children and teens should use the restroom before class begins. It helps if you invite them to do so just before class begins. If one student needs multiple bathroom breaks in the same class period, please tell the DFF/ARE so that we can follow up with the parents for more information and, possibly, solutions.

Dismissal

Be sure your watch or classroom clock is set to the correct time. Please continue teaching or productive learning activities until class time is up. Parents are very grateful when class ends on time, as they often have plans for activities immediately after class. Please be mindful of this.

Children in Grades Pre-K through Grade 5 must be picked up by a parent from the classroom. If a parent does not pick up their child, please bring the child to the RE office. We will help the child contact their parent and will stay with them until their parent arrives.

Middle school children must be picked up inside the building, but they may be dismissed from the classroom. High school teens may be dismissed from the building altogether.

III. Faith Formation Resources and Supplies

Curriculum

Bringing Good News is the title of the Archdiocesan RE Curriculum. It contains 14 overall standards (these are the same for each grade) and many indicators (specific to each grade level) which list what children should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of each grade of RE.

St. Michael's RE uses Pflaum *Gospel Weeklies* for Pre-K through Grade 6.

This curriculum conforms to the Archdiocesan standards in *Bringing Good News*. Most “indicators” are covered in the children's catechism from Pflaum. **Please note how crucial it is to cover the children's catechism!** The Pflaum program has two components: a booklet with all the basic teachings of our faith entitled “What the Church Believes and Teaches”; and the children's worksheets, which are dated for each Sunday's Gospel reading. Tuesday's class will always look ahead to the Gospel coming up, and Sunday's class will always cover that day's Gospel reading.

St. Michael's RE uses Benzinger's *Be My Disciples* for Grades 7 and 8, and this curriculum also strongly conforms to the Archdiocesan standards in *Bringing Good News*. The program includes an online component for emailing weekly quizzes home and getting the test results returned to the catechist. Catechists should cover one chapter per week, in order to finish two books (one for each semester) per year. We cover “Christ in the New Testament” (fall) and “Christ Reveals God's Mystery” (spring) in 7th Grade. “Christ in the Liturgy” (fall) and Life in Christ Jesus” (spring) are covered in 8th Grade.

There is also a calendar for Key Bible Stories that we've developed in-house as a response to our RE families requesting that we teach a wider knowledge of Scripture (up to Grade 6).

Benzinger's *Family Life* is required for Grades K – 8 as an essential component for both catechesis and child protection. Only the Parent Connection should be sent home. The rest should fit into class time.

Sacramental Preparation in all cases occurs outside of RE classes.

- First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation books are sent home for parents to work on with their children.

- Confirmation preparation occurs half in small group sessions (with peers) here at St. Michael's and half at home (with parents) based on the *Chosen* curriculum by Ascension Press.

Confirmation preparation small group registration is not general high school RE. Please ask the DFF if you have any questions.

Library

Materials for your own ongoing formation are available in the DFF's library, the parish library, and (most conveniently) on the FORMED website.

RE also provides supplementary materials including reference books, activity resources, storybooks, and videos to support and enhance the curriculum. If you have a class that wants to know about missionary work, for example, we have some Maryknoll magazines in the parish library magazine rack.

Please cover the required curriculum (Pflaum *Gospel Weekly*, Benzinger *Be My Disciples*, or Ascension Press *Chosen*; Benzinger *Family Life*; and Key Bible Story) before adding anything else to the class time, and please tell the DFF before introducing materials to class. It's important for our office to know what you're doing, so that we too can answer parents' questions about class.

School Supplies, Craft Materials, Sharing Space

In the workroom back closet, there are craft supplies for use in all RE classes. Please borrow only those supplies that you will use that day in class. Please return all supplies to the closet at the end of each class. If you notice that we're running low on materials, please let RE staff know. Each class has storage space in the room, usually in a file cabinet, so that other classes and groups can use the room during the week. Please be gracious toward those with whom you share classroom space. Put away your own things and protect the belongings of other classes as best you can.

It is also important to clean up (or have the students clean up) at the end of class, especially if you used glue, paint, or something else that could get onto the tables or desks. The white board should be erased after every class. (Even dry erase marker becomes permanent in time.)

Desks or tables may be rearranged to better serve the needs of your class, but they should be returned to their default placement when your session is over. There's a picture by the whiteboard showing the default arrangement. (Other groups are supposed to be following this rule, too. Tell the DFF or ARE if you run into problems with this.)

Bibles are available in case you want your students to practice finding Scripture in the Bible or the curriculum doesn't go deep enough. Often, you'll find a store of Bibles in your classroom, but let us know if you need help finding some before class. Please be sure the students treat each Bible with care and reverence.

It is preferable that food and drink not be part of the class session. Certain students may need to bring food for themselves (diabetics, those with low blood pressure, etc.). We'll notify you if we hear of medical needs for food; please let us know, too, in case there's a substitute in your class.

Books, CD Players, DVDs/Videos, and Other Equipment

Newer classrooms have TVs and DVD players. Older rooms require A/V setup for showing movies. Smart TVs have internet access! Let us know ahead of time, and we'll set up any equipment needed and show you how it works.

There are many children's movies in the parish library. Always double and triple check for age appropriateness before showing a film. When in doubt, ask the DFF or ARE.

CDs for meditation music or music to play during a craft activity are in the parish library and the DFF's office.

If you would like to request or suggest a new resource, please write a message to the DFF or ARE.

Field Trips

Field trips enhance the class and provide movement for young people. They are encouraged!

1. Speak with the DFF or ARE ahead of time. We'll check for scheduling conflicts and provide you with a radio (walkie talkie). It is vitally important that we know where every child is at all times, so please don't surprise us by disappearing from your classroom.
2. **Take your emergency backpack, your attendance folder, and the radio** we will provide to you for that class period. **Leave the radio on.** If you need to communicate with staff, hold down the talk button for as long as you are talking, and then release the button, so we can respond.
3. Be careful to not disrupt or distract any other classes or group meetings.
4. When visiting the church, prepare your class to behave reverently and appropriately. Catechists cannot assume that students will know what that behavior is and so must be proactive in this regard. Often, a review of how to genuflect before leaving the classroom is useful. Of course, food, drink, candy, and gum are never allowed inside the church.

IV. Emergency Procedures

Inclement Weather

St. Michael's Church follows Howard County Public School System for weather-related closings. When Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is closed, RE classes will not be held, and our campus is closed. See <http://www.hcpss.org/> or call 410-313-6666 for HCPSS notifications. We will email RE families and volunteers, publish the decision on our website, record it on our answering machine, and post it on our Facebook page as soon as we get the cancellation notice from HCPSS. **In all cases, parents and volunteers must always use their best judgment regarding personal safety.**

Emergency Response Terminology

- **Emergency** means an unexpected occurrence, either natural or man-made, that requires immediate action to save lives, minimize injuries, and protect property and the environment.
- **Evacuation** is used when conditions outside are safer than inside. Fires, smoke, bomb threats, and suspicious packages are a few examples.
- **Shelter-In-Place** is used primarily during a weather emergency, such as a tornado. The idea is to seek –shelter- away from windows and other structural weak points in the building. Shelter in the basement is the most preferred place, when time and space allow it. During RE classes, there are too many students to fit in the basement hallway, so we will drill with most students in the hallways outside their own classrooms.
- **Lock-down** is used to protect children and adults from potential dangers inside or outside. For example, the idea is to –lock- the classroom door against armed assailants.

Evacuation (in case of fire, for example):

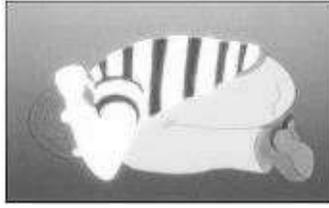
An evacuation map is posted prominently next to the hallway door in each classroom. Every catechist should become familiar with the map in their room and review it with students at the beginning of the year. We will hold fire drills every year.

- Fire alarm sounds. Stay calm.
- Catechist brings attendance folder, emergency backpack.
- There should be one adult preceding students and one at the end of the line.
- Last adult to leave turns off lights, close doors and remove magnetic strip (so the door locks shut), count students as they file out.
- Children, youths, adults remain quiet and single-file.
- Zone leaders (staff usually) check bathrooms to confirm no one is left behind.
- On arrival at designated locations, catechists count children again.
- Catechists report their attendance to the Zone Leader.

Shelter-In-Place (in case of tornado, for example):

Note: Depending on your classroom location, the shelter location varies. Familiarize yourself with the classroom map and your location.

- A whistle in the hallway or public address announcement will alert you to shelter-in-place.
- Catechist, count children before exiting classroom; bring the attendance folder and emergency backpack.
- Turn off lights, move the door magnetic strip and close the door (so that it locks shut) upon exiting.
- Children, youths, and adults remain quiet.
- Go to the hallway designated for your classroom.
- When you arrive at location, count children again.
- Instruct children how to get into a protective position (Drop, Tuck, and Hold): Put head next to the wall, with hands over the back of head and neck, tucked into a ball.



- Report attendance to the Zone Leader.
- The Zone Leader (usually St. Michael's staff) will check bathrooms to confirm no one is left behind.

Lock-down (in case of armed assailant, for example):

Threat on the grounds or in the building

- A public address announcement will alert you to lock-down.
- Turn off lights.
- Lock all doors (by moving the magnetic strip and shutting the door).
- Close windows and blinds.
- Students sit on the floor away from doors and windows.
- Students and adults remain absolutely quiet.
- Gather attendance folder and emergency backpack in case of need to leave quickly.
- Ignore fire alarm unless otherwise instructed; this can be a ruse used by the assailant to get everyone into the hallway.
- If outside the building when a lock-down begins, catechist should lead students to shelter (such as the rectory or the small church); then report your location over the radio. The idea is to get away from the affected building. Do not come nearer to the affected building in an attempt to find shelter. Remain unseen by an assailant and out of range.

General Guidelines for all Emergencies:

Catechist and Aide are responsible for children and youths at all times.

Count students and know how many students you are responsible for.

Be especially cognizant of students who went to the bathroom or who ran errands during class. Zone Leaders will reunite the class as soon as possible or use the radio, if the child ends up with a Zone Leader in a different zone than the class. Catechists should keep in mind the students who attended class that day who are not with you at the time of the emergency message broadcast. Where did they last go? Please be ready with that information when asked by staff or emergency workers.

When a Student is Ill or Hurt

If a student complains of illness/discomfort during class and the catechist deems it necessary, an aide should escort the student to the RE office. The DFF/ARE will determine whether to let the student rest quietly for a short time or to contact the parents. If parents are called, they will be asked to pick up their child immediately.

If a child or adult is hurt or injured during the class time, the catechist or aide should notify the DFF/ARE immediately. The DFF/ARE will then determine whether first aid (available in the RE office) or more serious medical intervention is necessary. If the latter course is called for, the RE office staff will activate the emergency information on file for each student, and will call 911.

We have Incident Report forms that should be filled out for every incident. The DFF/ARE will fill one out with your help.

Practicing Universal Precautions (for Blood-Borne Pathogens)

Any volunteer or paid school personnel must wear gloves while caring for a student or any other person who is bleeding or who has vomited. Disposable medical gloves for this purpose are available in the first aid kits around the building. Gloves serve the safety of everyone, not just your safety, and they are mandatory.

Illegal Substances, Search & Seizure

As a private institution, we retain the right to and will search for and seize drugs, weapons, or other contraband items when there is a reasonable belief that such contraband items are in the possession of a child or teen. The DFF will assist local government authorities by reporting such possessions and will cooperate fully with them. If any catechist, aide, or other person suspects there may be contraband on the property during the operation of RE, they are to notify the DFF immediately.

RE reserves the right to inspect all filing cabinets, closets, drawers, and any other parish-supplied enclosures. In addition, we reserve the right to inspect any minor's personal property when there is a reasonable belief that the minor is in violation of the rules and policies of RE.

V. Child Protection

Adults

The Archdiocese of Baltimore requires that all volunteers and paid personnel who work with children must complete a background check, an application with references, and online training. If you will be driving minors, you will need to be cleared as a driver within the AOB in addition to the normal VIRTUS requirements. (Driving is a box you check as you create your VIRTUS account, or we can notify the archdiocese later.)

It is prudent to periodically review the archdiocesan Policy for the protection of youth and the Code of Conduct for all Church personnel (paid and unpaid). Both documents can be found here <https://www.archbalt.org/child-and-youth-protection/>.

Children and Teens

Children aged 14-17 years who volunteer to work with younger children must complete Worthy of the Call training. These children must view the training here at St. Michael's, talk about it with staff, and complete an application with references.

At age 18, they become adults and must complete the adult requirements on VIRTUS.

VI. Training and On-Going Formation for Catechists

DFF Class Observation/Feedback

During the course of the year, the DFF will visit all classrooms to observe the class and to meet the students. The DFF looks forward to learning new approaches and skills from you and passing it on to other catechists. It is also an opportunity to assist the catechist for better implementation of program goals and to make suggestions on methodology and resources that can be used to enhance and enrich class sessions. We each have individual gifts that we bring to this ministry. It is a privilege to witness the work you do in your classrooms. Thank you for your hospitality!

Ongoing Formation

St. Michael's offers a wide array of Adult Faith Formation retreats, workshops, bible studies, and small group opportunities, and for our catechists and aides, we offer further training opportunities throughout the year based in part on your expressed interests.

Catechists are encouraged to take a spiritual retreat for themselves annually. Besides opportunities available through the parish Evangelization / AFF efforts, there is a list of retreat centers at the end of this handbook.

Catechetical formation should be thoroughly comprehensive in its presentation of the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life. Comprehensive formation:

- Enlightens faith;
- Directs the heart toward God;
- Fosters participation in the liturgy;
- Inspires apostolic activity; and
- Nurtures a life in accord with the spirit of Christ.

Retreat Centers/Spiritual Formation and Renewal

Bon Secour

1525 Marriottsville Road Marriottsville, MD 21104

<https://rccbonsecours.com/> or 410-442-3120, Directed by Kevin Cassidy

The sisters of Bon Secour offer a variety of sponsored programs, or you can arrange your own retreat or conference. We are happy to assist you making all the arrangements. The Center sits at the highest point of 313 acres of pastures and woodlands adjacent to Patapsco State Park.

Gardens, walking trails, pond, large outdoor pool (in season), indoor fitness center, library and bookstore are available to guests.

Our Lady's Center (Shrine)

An Apostolate of the Laity, <http://www.ourladyscenter.net> or 410-461-5066

3301 S. Rogers Avenue, Ellicott City 21043

The purpose of the Center is to promote Marian and Eucharistic devotion. Facilities include an outdoor shrine, Stations, a memorial, and a mediation area.

Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center & Center for Family Development

www.ourladyofbethesda.org or 301-365-0612

Our Lady of Bethesda is operated by the Legionaries of Christ and the Regnum Christi Apostolic

Movement and offers a full program of retreats, spiritual formation and spiritual direction for the laity. 7007 Bradley Boulevard, Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Seton Shrine

Coordinated by Bridget Bassler, 301-447-6606 or <https://setonshrine.org/retreat-pilgrimage/>
339 S. Seton Ave., Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Wonderful daytrip/pilgrimage site with daily Mass, Confessions, guided or self-guided tours, outdoor prayer sites, historic cemetery, a museum, and ample space to pray and reflect.

Shrine of St. Anthony

<http://www.shrineofstanthony.org/>

Directed by Fr. Michael Heine, OFM Conv., 410-531-2800 or info@shrineofstanthony.org
12290 Folly Quarter Rd., Ellicott City, MD 21042

Daily Mass and Confessions, upcoming events such as workshops and seminars, a gift shop, etc.

There are many others sites worth the time investment!

VII. RE Staff

Juliana Weber, Director of Faith Formation (DFF)

Joann Wozniak, Administrator for Religious Education (ARE)

Sally Amatucci, Administrative Assistant for Religious Education

Office Hours

These office hours are a general rule of thumb. Please call or email ahead of time, since there are late events and off-campus meetings that interrupt the regular flow of things.

Sundays when there is RE class, 8am - Noon

Monday – Thursday, 10am – 4:30pm are "core hours"

Fridays, Saturdays, and evenings by appointment

Helpful Websites

Church

Archdiocese of Baltimore: <https://www.archbalt.org/> -- local Catholic news, Archbishop Lori's publications (especially note those on faith formation and evangelization)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org -- important documents, readings of the day, daily Scripture reflections, Catholic news and initiatives

The Vatican (The Holy See): www.vatican.va -- Church documents, papal speeches and homilies, Catholic news, etc.

Scripture

Online Bible www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm

Catechist Formation

vlc.udayton.edu

www.mycatholicfaithdelivered.com for low-cost AFF

www.formed.org FORMED resources like Brother Francis videos with the parish passcode **HYWN36**

www.catholiconline.com

Lesson Planning and Resources

FORMED resources like Brother Francis videos www.formed.org with the parish passcode HYWN36

Free Flashcard Maker - www.kitzkikz.com/flashcards -- excellent for getting kids to interact, make friends and learn!

Saints of the Day and Minute Reflections www.americancatholic.org/

Word on Fire online videos (Bishop Robert Barron)
www.wordonfire.org/resources/video/

Kid Catholic channel on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8xnRLyV1vmPL-PFiu-1bYg>

www.thereligionteacher.com for free lesson plans and RE resources

www.catechist.com free videos, quizzes and other RE resources

<http://www.pflaumweeklies.com/catechists-teachers/> Pflaum resources

Worksheets, coloring pages, other activities at catholicmom.com

Child Protection and Human Sexuality

Archdiocese of Baltimore Office of Child Protection (Policy, Code of Conduct, other documents and news releases) <https://www.archbalt.org/child-and-youth-protection/>

VIRTUS (your compliance account) www.virtusonline.org

Human Sexuality www.parentsandkidstalking.com