

Our Mother of Consolation
Parent/Student PREP Handbook
Revised 2023-2024



Parish Mission Prayer

Nourished by the Word and Eucharist, we, the members of Our Mother of Consolation Parish, strive to create a vital, welcoming Catholic faith community that embraces each person. Acknowledging our blessings and supporting one another, we humbly serve the needs of God's people and work to be the presence of Christ in our world.

THE PREP PROGRAM: A FAMILY CATECHESIS MODEL

As a welcoming community of faith, Our Mother of Consolation Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) has the rich tradition of our Catholic faith both as its heritage and as the basis for promoting religious formation. With our families, we hope to participate in the transmission of Catholic catechesis, Gospel values, and in fostering a vibrant faith in each child. In order to achieve this end, we invite parents to join us in full support of our program.

“Catechesis describes the essential ministry of the (Catholic) Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages...Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine” of the Roman Catholic Church. (*National Directory for Catechesis*, no.1, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). Keeping in mind that all the baptized have a right to catechesis, every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness (*General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 189). Catechetical and sacramental programs are inclusive of parishioners with disabilities and may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The PREP program is designed to empower the family to nurture its faith. It emphasizes the importance of the Parents as the primary Catechists in their children's lives and provides guidance, material, and events that help Parents in this essential responsibility.

The program consists of classes held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. This program begins with 9:00 AM Mass and includes participation in Sunday Story for Grades 1 and 2. At the end of Mass, children and Catechists line up in the front of the church and then move to their classrooms. Dismissal is at 11:30 AM. On alternate weeks (2nd and 4/5th Sundays), home based lessons are taught. These are to be completed ***with the support of*** parental instruction – Parents being the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. Parents are responsible for

“teaching” the children their lesson, no matter what grade level the child is assigned. The lessons to be taught are posted online with teaching instructions given to parents at the opening PREP meeting. Parents are asked to contact the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation at the Parish Center (215-247-0430) if they have any questions or concerns.

ARRIVAL

PREP begins with family attendance at Mass, with children in PREP Years 1 and 2 participating in Sunday Story. Students and their Catechists line up according to PREP years at the front of the Church and proceed to their classrooms. If you attend another Mass, please bring your child to the side entrance of the church (school side) where your child will wait until Mass concludes. Students need to bring their textbooks unless notified via e-mail.

ATTENDANCE – ABSENTEE POLICY

Regular and continuous attendance at class is essential for a child’s continuing faith formation. When a child does miss a class, the ***Parents assume the responsibility of instructing the child on the missed lesson. The lessons taught are posted on the website.*** At the end of every home based lesson in Years 1 to 5, children submit an online assessment as directed at the beginning of the PREP year.

Archdiocesan policy considers ***three*** absences in a year to be excessive. If a child misses more than three onsite classes, the Pastoral Associate will assess the child’s readiness to receive a Sacrament and/or their readiness for advancement to the next year.

Absences should be for serious reasons only. Excused absence includes illness of student or illness or death in the family. For other urgent reasons, please call the Pastoral Associate. ***For all absences, send an email to the Pastoral Associate.***

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Our Mother of Consolation PREP Program involves a partnership with Parents. Parents assume the responsibility of teaching their child certain lessons assigned on alternate Sundays. The following procedures are followed for missed lessons:

- Students in Years 6 and 7: If a child is absent and/or has not completed more than three consecutive lessons (onsite or home based), the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation will contact the Parent to set up an appointment on a separate day from the day of PREP to check both the completion of the missed assignments and the understanding of the material. This helps to assure the child’s understanding of the material required for him/her to progress to the next PREP level.
- Students in Years 1 to 5: For every onsite lesson missed, students need to submit an online assessment according to the directions given at the beginning of the PREP year. These must be submitted by the Wednesday following the onsite lesson.

CURRICULUM

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies are used in Years 1 to 5. Each lesson helps connect the children to the Gospel message heard in Mass and present the teaching of the Church through the vision of the weekly Gospel message. Lessons follow a three-year lectionary cycle and use developmentally appropriate activities and stories to teach our Catholic Faith. In addition, at the beginning of each year, the child receives a copy of *What the Church Believes and Teaches* to provide age-appropriate catechesis on Catholic doctrine and practices throughout the year. Parent teaching resources and online assessments for children are provided at <https://www.pflaumweeklies.com/family/>.

Confirmation preparation in PREP is a two-year process. In Year 6 the *Chosen* program published by Ascension Press is used. Parents are encouraged to review this program by going to the website at <http://confirmationstudy.com/about/tour/>. For PREP Year 7, Ascension Press *Theology of the Body for Middle School* is used. Together these two years support the child's preparation to complete their Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church.



DISMISSAL

The Catechists will accompany the children to the parking lot at 11:30AM. Parents can enter the parking lot through the entrance closest to Chestnut Hill Avenue and line up in their cars to pick up their child. Parents of children in Years 1 to 3 use the lane closest to the convent. Older siblings of these children will join their younger brothers and sisters who are in Years 1 to 3. Parents of children in Years 4 to 7 use the parking lot lane closest to Norwood Avenue for pick up. For safety reasons, the doors of the school are locked during class time. If a Parent or Guardian needs to pick up their child early, they need to contact the Pastoral Associate ahead of time and come to the front entrance of the school building to sign out and pick up their child for early dismissal.

COMMUNICATION WITH CATECHISTS

Parents are asked to contact the Pastoral Associate with any questions or concerns they may have. The Pastoral Associate will discuss this with the Catechist and necessary communication will continue as required.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Effective communication promotes a mutually supportive program. Parents are provided with a calendar at the beginning of the program. The calendar and the program outline are also posted on the website. All PREP communication with parents is through email, the parish bulletin, KYW radio in emergencies, and PREP links on the parish website at www.omcparish.com. Parents are asked to keep the PREP Office informed of their current email address.

CONDUCT

The PREP Program offered by Our Mother of Consolation Parish is designed to assist Parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behaviors that are in accord with Catholic teaching.

Students are expected to display respect for administration, Catechists, adult volunteers, students, and the property belonging to others.

Our program has a *No Tolerance Policy* for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including, but not limited to:

- bullying
- acts of obstinacy or improper language
- fighting
- physical, emotional, or psychological intimidation
- vandalism
- demeaning behaviors such as name-calling, obscene language, or gesture
- harassment

In the event a child engages in any of the listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct and has failed to respond to a Catechist's request to stop or correct the behavior, the Catechist will report the inappropriate behavior to the Pastoral Associate who will speak with the child.

Following this conversation, a call will be made to his/her Parents/Guardians. If the behavior does not improve, the Parents/Guardians will meet with the Pastoral Associate and Catechist to discuss the procedures necessary to change the behavior.

DRESS

All students attending PREP classes are expected to dress appropriately for class. Students may not wear shirts with offensive or inappropriate logos, language, or messages. In addition, students may not wear shoes that are harmful to the floors in the building or potentially harmful to themselves - baseball or football shoes with "cleats" and/or shoes with rollers.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

When registering or re-registering a child who has an IEP from his/her public/private school, please provide the PREP Office with a copy of the document. An IEP can help guide us in making accommodations for a child. The document may be shared with the child's Catechist to ensure we are working to accommodate a child's needs. The IEP will be handled in a confidential manner by both the Pastoral Associate and the Catechist.

LATENESS

When a student arrives late for class, he/she upsets the flow of the class and impairs personal progress. **Every effort** should be made for your child to **arrive on time**. If a child is constantly late, the Parents/Guardians will be contacted to discuss the situation.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CUSTODY OF A CHILD

In custody situations where only one parent is to have contact with the child/children, the custodial parent must inform the Pastoral Associate. The document for proof of custody will be kept on file in the PREP Office. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the office with any changes.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION: RECONCILIATION AND EUCHARIST

The Archdiocese requires that Sacraments be received in the parish in which the family is registered. Sacramental preparation is the joint effort of the Parents/Guardians, Parish, and Catechists. At present, we celebrate First Reconciliation and First Eucharist in Year 2. A Parent Sacrament Forum is held at the beginning of the PREP year to give faith formation enrichment to the Parents/Guardians and to go over necessary details for the reception of the Sacraments.



To share in communion for the first-time children must have “sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity” (Code of Canon Law 913). Readiness is "determined in consultation with Priest, Parents/Guardians, Catechists, and child." The following are also required:

- Registration at OMC or permission from your Pastor to receive the Sacrament/s at OMC
- A copy of the child’s baptismal certificate
- Attendance at scheduled onsite classes and completion of home-based lessons
- Weekly Mass attendance
- Knowledge of all required prayers and understanding of the Eucharist preparation text
- Readiness to receive the Sacrament
- Parent/s’ attendance at the Parent Sacrament Forum, retreat and rehearsal
- Minimal absences (no more than 3)

SACRAMENT PREPARATION: CONFIRMATION

It is the policy at Our Mother of Consolation Parish that students continue their religious education uninterrupted through Confirmation. The Archdiocese requires that Sacraments be received in the parish in which the family is registered. Sacramental preparation is the joint effort of the Parents/Guardians, Parish, and Catechists. At present we celebrate Confirmation in the spring of Year 7. A Parent Sacrament Forum is held at the beginning of the PREP year to give faith formation enrichment to the Parents/Guardians and to go over necessary details for the reception of the Sacrament. The following requirements must also be fulfilled:



- Registration at OMC or permission from your Pastor to receive the Sacrament/s at OMC
- Previous reception of Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and First Eucharist
- Weekly Mass attendance
- Attendance at scheduled onsite PREP classes and completion of home-based lessons
- Knowledge of the Catholic faith and an expressed desire for full membership
- Active participation in one of two Confirmation service days
- Completion of Confirmation Statement of Intent and saint’s research
- Sponsor Certificate of Eligibility
- Parent/s’ attendance at the Parent Sacrament Forum

- Minimal absences (no more than 3)

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has a Safe Environment Policy in place. One lesson per year called “Kid Talk” is taught to the students in the second half of the year. You may view these lessons online prior to its being taught at <http://phillyocf.org/prep-resources/>. Parents may opt out of these lessons for their child by contacting the PREP Office in writing prior to the published date on which the lesson will be taught.

SAFETY

- **FIRE/EVACUATION:** In the event of an actual fire or other emergency, directions for evacuation of the building are posted in each classroom. A fire/evacuation drill will be conducted in the beginning of the year so that all students and catechists are familiar with this procedure.
- **FIRST AID POLICY:** Every attempt is made to provide a safe and healthy environment. Since accidents sometimes do occur, and children may become ill quickly, the following procedure will be followed:
 1. The Pastoral Associate will notify the Parents/Guardians. If they are unreachable, the emergency contact person will be called.
 2. If neither of the above parties is available and/or time is of the essence, the Catechist or the Pastoral Associate will call 911. A PREP staff member will continue to call contact persons until someone is notified.
- **MEDICATION:** Except in extraordinary circumstances (which will be approved by the Pastoral Associate) the Religious Education personnel will not maintain or supervise the taking of medication. It is the responsibility of the Parents to inform and update the PREP Office about allergies and any other medical condition that would affect the safety of the child in the PREP program.
- **SHELTER IN PLACE:** Shelter in Place is an emergency response plan in case of an outside threat to the children or school building. This response can only be called by the police or fire department. If our program were instructed to *shelter in place*, we would initiate our plan to protect the children. If Shelter in Place is called, no one is permitted to leave or enter the building. It becomes our responsibility to care for the basic needs of our children until we are given permission to safely dismiss the students to their Parents.

SNOW EMERGENCY & CANCELLATIONS

In the event of severe inclement weather, listen to *KYW News Radio 1060 AM*. In the event of a non-weather-related cancellation, we will make every effort to contact families as early as possible via KYW and/or an e-mail to you to inform you of the cancellation.



SPECIAL NEEDS

Our PREP Program is available for students with learning style differences and challenges. Parents/Guardians of any child with special needs participating in PREP should contact the Pastoral Associate to discuss how their child can be supported in their faith formation.

RE-REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Re-registration for students presently in the program takes place during the months of April and May. No registrations will be accepted after September 1st.

NEW STUDENT REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

For a child to be registered in the PREP Program the following must be met:

- The family needs to be registered in OMC Parish.
- Parents and child meet with the Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation
- A copy of the child's baptismal certificate must be provided.
- Registration form completed by September 1st
- Registration fee paid in full



Students transferring from another PREP Program need the following additional information:

- Dates of any Sacraments received
- Copy of transfer letter from previous program DRE stating the child's completed grade level and the year that level was completed.

Children from outside of OMC Parish are only accepted into the PREP Program if space is available. Preference for registration is given to currently registered and active OMC parishioners. Children from other parishes must have a letter of permission from the Pastor of their home parish.

TUITION

Tuition for Years 1 to 7

- One child \$200.00 (Each additional child... \$100)
- Tuition covers the cost of student educational materials, parent resources, consumable materials used during onsite classes, and catechist training and support.
- A replacement fee of \$50 is charged for lost student educational materials.
- If a family is experiencing financial difficulty, please contact the Pastoral Associate at the Parish Office. No child will be denied access to religious education for financial reasons.

WEBSITE

The parish website, www.omcparish.com, has a link for PREP which can be found under the “Faith Formation” tab. The PREP calendar, handbook, and lesson schedule for onsite and home based teaching will be posted there along with other material and links as they are developed.

This handbook acts as an agreement between Parents/Guardians and their child/ren who participate in Our Mother of Consolation Parish Religious Education Program. By enrolling your child/ren into our program, you agree to support and abide by the standards outlined in this handbook. Parents are encouraged to discuss these standards with their child/ren to ensure that all parties understand the responsibilities of participation in the PREP Program.