

**Immaculate Conception Church, Annandale, NJ**  
**Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)**

# **Parent Handbook**

# Immaculate Conception Church, Annandale, NJ

## Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

*“ICC PREP’s mission is to engage families with dynamic, Spirit-filled experiences, empowering them to proclaim the truth and love of our Lord Jesus Christ as life-long Roman Catholic disciples.”*

### PREP Announcements

We are excited to share information with you about ICC’s Parish Religious Education Program (PREP).

This multi-page digital package is a parent handbook which contains our policies. We are confident that this information will help you choose the best program for your family.

While the Church must always remain the same in its teachings on faith and morals, as the living and breathing Body of Christ, we must adapt the manner in we teach these Truths, so as to meet people where they are in today’s modern society. In a rapidly ever-changing technological culture, this is not an easy task; however, we continue to build upon those before us, with salvation, as our shared common goal. Saint Pope John Paul II referred to this as the *New Evangelization*.

### What does this mean for my family?

Our programs are always evolving. All classes meet in the school and are for children only. Our parish also provides optional opportunities for Adult Formation, and involvement in Ministry. You are your child’s primary Catechist and as such, your family should be actively participating in weekly Mass and engaged in the life of the parish. We are happy to support you in this solemn and sacred promise you made at your child’s Baptism. Additionally, as your child(ren)’s primary Catechist, it is expected that you help in one area of PREP, at least once per year, or more often, as needed.

We are happy to chat with you regarding any further questions you may have.

God Bless,

ICC PREP Team

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## Special Note from the Parish Catechetical Leader:

*Dear ICC Families,*

*Our PREP programs are 100% volunteer run. Please prayerfully consider enriching our program with your support as a Catechist, Aide, Hall Monitor, Nurse, Arrival and Dismissal Coordinator, etc. The commitment has endless spiritual rewards, allowing you to cultivate the Catholic faith in our children. Our Catechists are not professional educators. They are parishioners, like you, who feel inspired to share in the faith formation of our children by teaching the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are in need of your time and assistance this upcoming year to successfully run the programs described in our registration information packet.*

*If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to our PREP office.*

*Please note that program availability will be contingent on proper staffing of the volunteer positions noted above. Again, please prayerfully consider this ministry opportunity. We look forward to hearing from you.*

*In Christ's Peace,*

**Coleen M. D'Amato**

*Parish Catechetical Leader*

## PREP Ministers (Volunteers)

### Top 10 Reasons to Become a Catechist

1. You will grow in your own faith, learn the teachings of the Church, and deepen your relationship with Jesus.
2. Your Baptism calls you to share in Jesus' ministry.
3. Children, teens, and adults in today's world, more than ever, need to hear the Good News of Jesus.
4. Children, teens, and adults in today's world, more than ever, need to encounter good role models of faith.
5. You have much to share with those you'll teach, and you'll have opportunities to share faith with other catechists.
6. Today's catechetical textbooks/resources offer outstanding support.
7. You'll be challenged, you'll have fun, and you'll make new friends.
8. You'll be helping people deepen their relationship with Jesus. (You'll be evangelizing!)
9. You'll be handing on a 2000-year-old Tradition that changes lives.
10. It's our job: Jesus sent us to "go and teach all nations."

*(Credit: Joe Paprocki, National Faith Formation Consultant)*



The following volunteer PREP Minister positions are needed each year:

1. Catechists
2. Aides
3. Hall Monitors
4. Nurses (*licensed*)
5. Arrival and Dismissal Coordinators
6. Substitute positions for all of the above.

### Volunteer PREP Minister Requirements:

- Must be actively practicing Roman Catholics in good standing in the Church
- Teen Helpers are encouraged; Confirmation is a prerequisite
- Adult volunteers 18 and over, must complete Diocesan requirements prior to volunteering in our programs:
  - All paperwork provided by our office, including completion of:
    - Protecting God's Children/Virtus Training Workshop
    - Background Check
      - There is a small fee for the Background Check for which the parish is happy to reimburse you, or gratefully accept your donation of its cost 😊
- As a courtesy to our existing PREP Ministers, volunteering for a program takes place in phases. Each phase lasts approximately one week. Emails are sent out in corresponding phases:
  - Phase 1: Current Volunteers, Same Program, Same Grade
  - Phase 2: Current Volunteers, Same Program, Switching Grades
  - Phase 3: Current Volunteers, Different Program, Any Grade
  - Phase 4: New Volunteers
- Are eligible for benefits according to the program in which they first commit to the Parish Catechetical Leader, and which vary by program.

While every parent is expected to help in PREP at least once per year, the following discounts are available for those committed and eligible PREP Ministers as specified below.

## PREP Ministry discounts vary by program:

**Special Note:** *Tuition donations are always graciously appreciated and help provide free tuition for those with financial need.*

### **School Year Program**

- Catechists and Co-Catechists, and Nurses (*licensed*) will receive FREE basic family tuition, as a courtesy for their time commitment in and out of the classroom, plus the purchase of additional supplies.
- Aides will receive 50% off their basic tuition, as a courtesy for their time commitment.
- Hall Monitors/Arrival and Dismissal Coordinators will receive \$50 off their basic tuition.
- Sacrament Fees are not eligible for discounts.
- Volunteering in the School Year program secures your child's space in your desired session day and time for this program only; it does not guarantee your child's placement in the Summer program. Many people rely on your full commitment to our program.

### **Summer Program**

- Catechists and Co-Catechists will receive 50% off basic family tuition, as a courtesy for their time commitment in and out of the classroom, plus the purchase of additional supplies. Nurses (*licensed*) will also receive 50% off for their daily commitment to the program.
- Aides and Hall Monitors and Substitutes do not receive discounts for Summer PREP.
- Sacrament Fees are not eligible for discounts.
- Volunteering in this program secures your child's space in the Summer PREP program only; it does not guarantee School Year program session preference.
- Volunteers must commit to the full length of time each day for the length of the program or will forfeit their child's placement in the program and their child will automatically be moved to the school year program. Many people rely on your full commitment to our program.

## Role Responsibilities and Expectations of Committed Volunteers\*:

### \*All Volunteers:

- *Are expected to lead an exemplary Catholic life both in the classroom, and in the parish and outside secular community. This includes the regular participation in Sunday Mass and the sacraments.*
- *Participate in all Volunteer meetings and formation.*
- *Be present, punctual, and adhere to a Business Casual dress code each time we are scheduled to meet.*
- *Those volunteers 18 and older are additionally required to complete a background check, and a one time child protection workshop, entitled Virtus/Protecting God's Children.*

**Catechists:** Catechists are the leaders of the class. Catechists must not only teach, but share their personal story of faith, and be evangelizers of their students. Catechists are provided with teacher's manuals to assist them in their lesson planning, and execution of the lesson. Catechists should prepare their lessons well in advance to gain an excellent comprehension of the material at hand in order to share the lesson with the students in an engaging and Spirit filled way. Creative brainstorming with your aide, or other catechists in and out of your grade level, is strongly encouraged, as are supporting hands on crafts, games & activities to reinforce the lesson. Pinterest is a great resource! The PREP office is always here to support you too! Catechists are also the gentle disciplinarian of the Aide's child(ren). Those who volunteer as Co-Catechists must split their lesson planning, and lesson execution 50%/50%.

**Aides:** Aides are the Catechists' main support. Aides take attendance and are the gentle disciplinarian of the classroom, including of the Catechist's child(ren). They help students find a page, read a word, cut, etc. as needed. Aides are also a helpful cheerleader in the classroom when the need arises and students need encouragement to enter into a class discussion or answer a question. Aides also support the Catechist as needed by prepping some activities (example: cutting 20 crosses, collating and stapling an activity, etc.) Aides become very comfortable with the personality and flow of their class, and as such, if they are comfortable, Aides are also our first line of defense if their Catechist is absent (and then the PREP office finds a substitute aide to support you.)

**Arrival and Dismissal Coordinators:** Arrival and Dismissal Coordinators arrive 10-15 minutes early and stay until the last student is picked up. They assist the PREP Office in the arrival and dismissal of the students by helping students find their class, and by assisting with dismissal by offering a friendly reminder to classes who are running late, and monitoring all classes lined up in the gym. During our session, if needed, they also act as substitute Classroom Aides and Hall Monitors. One or more A/D Coordinators also assists with dismissal outside the building for students in grades 6, 7 & 8, who have permission to be dismissed to the parking lot.

**Hall Monitors:** Hall Monitors arrive 10 -15 minutes early. They are the eyes and ears of the hallways. They help direct children to and from class, to the Nurse, the restrooms or the PREP office. They assist a class if requested either for an urgent moment, or if requested by the PREP Office, as the aide for the day. Additionally, at the end of a session they help to be sure all children are out of the classrooms, hallways and bathrooms, windows are closed, lights are out, and doors are closed, as well as any additional light duties as directed by the PREP office (flip class signs, help organize supplies, collate and staple papers, etc.)

**Nurses:** Nurses are licensed professionals who volunteer their time. They arrive 10-15 minutes early. They are stationed in the lobby outside the PREP Office, where they are occasionally needed for a student with a health, or minor first aid, concern (*mostly band aids*). Our nurses assess the situation, handle any health emergencies, including Epi-Pen administration, and notify the PREP Office immediately. The PREP office handles all parent notification and phone calls, though the Nurse may be asked to speak to the parent if the parent has questions, or in the case of a serious health concern. If needed, Nurses also help with Arrival and Dismissal and Hall Monitoring.

## Religious Education Policies

The policies of the Religious Education Program of Immaculate Conception Church are determined by the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Formation of the Metuchen Diocese, the Pastor, and the Parish Catechetical Leader. The established policies are communicated through this Parent Handbook.

**Participation:** Parents are required to serve at least one time per year to assist in running our PREP programs. The following volunteer opportunities are available, each year, as well as occasional additional opportunities: Catechists, Aides, Hall Monitors, Nurses (*licensed*), Arrival and Dismissal Coordinators, and Substitutes for all volunteer opportunities.

Participation in Mass, the Sacraments, and parish life are the backbone of our faith and all of our programs, and as such, are required of every PREP student and their family. Families are expected to attend Sunday Mass every week, and Holy Days of Obligation. The sacrament of Reconciliation is available every Saturday and during special Advent and Lenten penance services. Please consult the Parish Website for current Mass times and current Weekly Reconciliation times.

Our faith community offers many ministries at Immaculate Conception Church, including Children's Ministries, which take place at Mass. Please visit the church website for more information: [www.iccannandale.org](http://www.iccannandale.org)

**Collaboration with Catechists:** For Catholic parents, the mission to catechize is rooted in the Sacrament of Marriage which consecrates them for the Christian education of their children. "This sacrament enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians". (*On the Family*, Pope John Paul II, 1981, 38) By virtue of this sacrament, parents are the primary educators of their children. By enrolling your children in our Religious Education Program, you are asking us to assist you in that process by providing a foundation in Church teachings and morals.

Therefore, parents are encouraged to work with, and communicate with their child's Catechist throughout the school year so that a collaborative effort may be made, each supporting the other in providing a foundation in Roman Catholic doctrine and morals. Together, you are to fulfill the mandate Christ gave His followers to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

**Relationships:** Children in our Religious Education Program are encouraged to be respectful, caring individuals. Honesty, fairness, courtesy and cooperation are expected and encouraged in order to prepare children for present and future relationships.

Recognizing that each child is a unique creation and gift of the Father, with special talents and capabilities, we encourage them to discover their uniqueness as children of God. A partnership between Catechists and parents creates an atmosphere which has a strong positive influence on the child. Careful listening and mutual respect set the foundation for sincere and meaningful communication.

Above all, the parents and Catechists must keep in mind that "it is ultimately not their efforts, but the interaction of God's grace and human freedom which leads people to accept faith and respond to it (*National Catechetical Directory*, 213)."



**Homework:** While prayers must be memorized at home by every child in our program (*with the assistance of their parents*), other class Homework will be given to your child/children at the discretion of your child's Catechist.

**Of special note:**

- It is expected that parents review the class material covered with their children, at home. You are provided with a schedule of the assigned chapters at the beginning of the year. In the event of inclement weather resulting in a session cancellation, you should complete the assigned chapter(s) at home with your child(ren) for that cancelled session.
- Sunday Pilot for 2023-2024: Families will be required to meet in class twice per month, and homeschool twice per month. Homeschooled work must be submitted at Mass on the Sunday for which there is no class scheduled.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade: is required to watch a 60 minute drama series about the life of Jesus; **Chosen\***, (Season 1) once per month prior to their first class of the month. (*\*Not related to our Confirmation program with the same title*). Parents should preview this series and watch it with their child, it will be discussed in class. More details to be provided.

**Textbooks & Bibles:** Children will be given their textbook on the first day of class and they are required to bring it to every class. Please write their name on the inside cover. This is your child's book to keep.

*The New American Bible Revised Edition*, one of the Catholic Bibles approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is given to students in Grade 5. Children in Grades 5, 6, 7 & 8, are required to bring their Bibles to every class, along with their Student textbook.

**Replacement Book costs:**

Grades 1 – 7: \$30 per textbook

Grade 8: \$40 for Chosen textbook

Bibles: \$15 per Bible

*~Prices of books are subject to change depending on the program used.*

**Prayers:** Praying is an essential part of our Faith. As their child's primary Catechist, Parents are expected and responsible to take the lead in teaching, explaining and testing the memorization of prayers with their child at home. The PREP Office is here to support you in this task. We will be praying together each time we meet as a class, as well as occasionally testing each child individually for prayer memorization. The PREP Office has provided the list of prayers to be memorized by grade level, towards the end of this Handbook.

**Exams:**

- Students will be tested on prayer memorization throughout the year.
- At the end of each unit, there is specific testing, verbal for lower grades, and written for upper grades. Parents are encouraged to review each unit to ensure that the vocabulary and doctrines are well understood by their children.
- At the conclusion of each grade level, students will be tested on basic faith knowledge, and to be sure the required prayers by grade level have been memorized.\
- At the conclusion of 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, students must complete the "7<sup>th</sup> Grade Test". A study guide will be provided to each 7<sup>th</sup> grade parent via email prior to the test. Students must complete this study guide at home, and then the Catechists will review the study guide, going over the correct answers, in class. Catechists will not "teach to the test" as part of their curriculum. Rather this exam will test all cumulative knowledge learned during the child's first 7 years of Religious Education, the child's Catholic family life experiences lived within the Church, the child's/family's regular attendance to Sunday Mass and other Holy Days of Obligation, and the child'/family's regular participation in the sacraments. This test serves as a pre-requisite to promote to the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation class level. **Current for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in 2023-2024: The "7<sup>th</sup> Grade Test" has been postponed until the first two weeks of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. A study guide will be sent home in August prior to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and your child's Catechist will review the study guide on the first day of class in September of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade.**

**Discipline:** Inappropriate behavior, lack of effort, or poor attitude on the part of a child will result in the child:

- ✓ being spoken to privately by his/her Catechist
- ✓ having a conference with the Parish Catechetical Leader
- ✓ parent being telephoned
- ✓ request for conference with parent and student

If the difficulty persists, the child will be withdrawn from the program until alternative solutions are worked out. If the child continues in the program, a method of on-going evaluation will be put into effect.

**Drugs, Vaping, Illegal Substances:** Drugs, Vaping, Smoking, Drinking and any substances illegal, or illegal only to minors, are not allowed on our premises. If a student is found to be in possession of any illegal substance, the student will be detained while police and parents are notified. Catechists have been directed not to send a student home with a driver who is visibly impaired/under the influence. The Parish Catechetical Leader reserves the right to call an emergency number.

**Additional Restrictions:** Cell phones, ear buds/air pods, and other technology, are not permitted at PREP. Catechists will collect all cell phones and return them to students at the end of class. Confiscated items will be returned to parents only.

**Learning Differences & Special Accommodations:** We are committed to loving and serving all of our children in the best way possible. If your child has an identified disability and/or requires special accommodations for learning, please describe their needs in your registration information. This information will remain confidential with our staff and your child's Catechist. This information will help us provide a better experience for your child in PREP. Please be aware, however, that since our catechists are all volunteers and since we do not employ professionally trained special needs teachers, your child's religious educational needs may not necessarily be best met in our standard classroom model. If you would like to speak privately to the Parish Catechetical Leader, feel free to do so at any time.

**Skipping a Year(s):** Skipping a PREP year(s) is prohibited. Students who miss a year will be automatically enrolled into the PREP year level which immediately follows the last PREP year they completed.

**Custodial Status:** It is the responsibility of the parents to notify the Parish Catechetical Leader in writing of custodial status and any restrictions concerning the non-custodial parent. A Court Certified decree of custody must be submitted to the office if there are custody issues. A letter from an attorney will not suffice.

**Photos:** Occasionally we will include photos of PREP students\* in Parish media (PREP email/newsletters, Parish Website & Bulletins) and occasionally these photos may be used in our Diocesan newspaper *The Catholic Spirit*. Examples of our use of student photos would include Service Projects, Respect Life Poster Contest winners, Sacraments, Assemblies, Retreats, etc. (*\*Photos are only used with parental permission. When you register for PREP you will be provided the option to allow, or decline, permission for your child's photo to be used.*)

**Food:** NO food is permitted during the PREP School Year Program. There are only 2 times where food will be permitted during PREP.

1. Summer PREP students will be permitted to bring a nut free snack from home to eat during snack time in class.
2. In the event that you have a child that requires food during PREP due to medical necessity, please alert the Parish Catechetical Leader and Catechist, and an exception to the above policy will be given.

**Allergies:** Please notify the PREP Office **and** your child's Catechist of **any allergies** that your child may have. It is especially important to notify us of life-threatening allergies. If your child requires an Epi Pen, please refer to our Table of Contents to find more detailed information regarding our Epi Pen policy.

**Medication(s):** Volunteers and staff do not administer any medication. If your child is taking medication which would affect the child's participation, please notify the Religious Education Office. If your child requires an Epi Pen, please refer to our Index to find more detailed information regarding our Epi Pen policy.

**Parish & School Property:** Please respect the Immaculate Conception School and Church property. Disrespect of property, vandalism and stealing are serious offenses, and will have serious consequences, including, but not limited to, suspension from the program.

The Immaculate Conception School playground is NOT for PREP use throughout the school year. It is for the parochial school (ICS) and its Aftercare program only. Please do not allow your children to access this area.

The elevator in our school is not for regular use. The elevator should be used only by students and Volunteers with a disability that prevents them from using the stairwells. Permission from the Parish Catechetical Leader prior to use is required.

**Arrival and Dismissal:** All classes meet in the Immaculate Conception School building and begin promptly at the designated class start time. *For the safety of our children, please drive slowly and carefully:*

- Park in designated parking lot spaces *ONLY*.
- Do NOT drive up or park in front of the school at the curb. This is strictly prohibited.
- Every student must be escorted to, and from, the school lobby, by their parent, each time class meets\*.
  - \*Students in Grades 6, 7 & 8 are permitted, via waiver/Permission for Parking Lot Release included in registration, to be dropped off from, and released to, the parking lot located between the Mary Garden and the School.
  - \*If you do not check off the Parking Lot Release waiver box at the time of registration, then you are required to escort your child into the school lobby, and pick them up in the school gym at the time of dismissal.
- No child without a signed release form will be permitted to leave the school building without a parent.
- Families who carpool must provide the PREP Office with a note of release, designating the name of the parent who will be dropping off and picking up their child. You may also include designated names in your on-line registration.
- Arrival begins no earlier than 15 minutes prior to class start time.
- Grades 1 – 5 line up and dismiss from the gym, unless noted. Parents must wait with their children until their Catechist has arrived. Classes exit the gym and proceed to their classrooms 5 minutes prior to class start time; class begins on time.
- Grades 6 – 8 go directly to their classrooms. They will dismiss directly from their classrooms to the parking lot. Or if they do not have parental permission to be released, they will be escorted by their Catechist/Aide to the gym to wait for their parents for pick up in the gym.
- Parents are not permitted beyond the school lobby/gym.
- Restrooms are for student use only.
- Students, along with their Catechist, will proceed to their classroom 5 minutes prior to their class start time, in order to be ready to begin class on time.
- Pick up in the lobby is promptly at the specified dismissal time.
- Students not picked up promptly at dismissal are provided with a 20 minute grace period:
  - 10-15 minutes after dismissal, both parents will be contacted.
  - If neither parent responds, the family's designated 3<sup>rd</sup> party Emergency Contact will also be contacted.
  - 20 minutes after dismissal, if the PREP Staff has not yet heard back from the parents or the 3<sup>rd</sup> party Emergency Contact, the authorities will be notified.

**Fire Drills:** Practice drills will be held each year. Children are to walk with the Catechist out of the classroom to the nearest exit and wait outside the building for further instructions. Catechists are required to take their Attendance Folders outside the building with them to account for each student's presence.

*( \*In case of a fire alarm, parents waiting for dismissal of children must vacate the building and wait outside.)*

**Emergency Closings:** The decision for an emergency closing will be made by the Parish Catechetical Leader in consultation with the Pastor. In the event of an Emergency Closing, parents will be notified via email. Please ensure that the PREP office has your most current email at all times. When Clinton Township public schools, or Immaculate Conception School close or cancel afterschool activities for inclement weather, we will also close.

## Attendance & Absences

**Summer Program:** For those participating in the Summer PREP Program, there are NO absences and NO late arrivals permitted. Due to the short and condensed nature of the program, any absences or late arrivals will result in an automatic removal from the Summer PREP program. The student will be required to enroll in the School Year program to receive credit for that respective year.

*(Please give careful consideration to your commitment to, and your enrollment in, the Summer PREP Program with this in mind.)*

**School Year Program:** For those students participating in the School Year program, the following absences are permitted:

- **3 Unexcused** absences for important personal reasons
- **Excused** absences for illness or other serious family emergencies  
(More than 2 excused absences for illness will a medical doctor's note.)
- **4 "late arrivals"** EQUAL 1 absence *(You are late if you arrive 5 minutes past class start time)*. Late arrivals must sign in, in the PREP Office. Extreme traffic and weather situations are always taken into account.
- **Sunday Family And Mass Centered Program for Mass Absences:** See the Schedules/Programs Sunday Pilot section of this handbook.

**Reporting an Absence:** Parents must email our office ([PREP@lccAnnandale.org](mailto:PREP@lccAnnandale.org)) as far ahead of class time as possible to notify us of the child's absence.

1. Include the following in the email: Child's first and last name, grade level, Catechist's name, and the reason for absence.
2. In the case of an emergency, please simply notify us as soon as possible after your emergency subsides.
3. Make-Up work is required. See below for more info.

**Make-Up Work:** Parents should consult the syllabus, and along with their child they should read the missed chapter(s) together, and discuss the questions at the end of the chapter(s). Students should handwrite the answers to the questions, and submit the work to their Catechist at the next class.

**Special Note for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Along with their child, parents should read the missed chapter, but must also watch the assigned chapter's video segments via the link and log in provided at the beginning of the school year. Essay questions will be posted, and parents must discuss the questions with their child, prior to their child handwriting the answers. Written work must be submitted to the Catechist at the next class.

**Please note:** Switching classes/sessions is not permitted in any program.

**Protecting God's Children:** The VIRTUS/Protecting God's Children program was developed to educate adults in identifying and preventing child sexual abuse. The Diocese of Metuchen requires that all adults who work with or around children in our diocese must complete the VIRTUS/Protecting God's Children Workshop, as well as be fingerprinted to complete a criminal background check. The parish complies with this requirement.

**Suspected Child Abuse:** The Diocese of Metuchen directs that if any adult Volunteer (including Catechists, Aides and Hall Monitors, and others) or Parish Staff (including the Parish Catechetical Leader), suspects a minor has been abused, whether or not the allegation is credible, the following be immediately notified:

- Diocese of Metuchen Diocesan Response Officer
- County Prosecutor

Additionally, by law, Parish Staff, and all Volunteers are legally obligated to immediately notify the following:

- NJ Department of Children Protection & Permanency (DCPP, formerly known as DYFS)
- Local Law Enforcement

Any information which leads a Catechist (or other volunteer) to believe that a student intends to harm himself/herself requires the Catechist to notify authorities. If a student asks to speak confidentially to a Catechist (or other volunteer), the Catechist should advise the student that information will be shared if the student is in danger of suicide, self-inflicted harm, etc. All Volunteers, including Catechists, are legally responsible.

### **Unescorted Permission to Walk to Parking Lot Policy for Grades 6, 7 & 8 ONLY:**

The Office of Discipleship Formation for Children believes that safety is a paramount concern when children are walking to and from parish religious education and formation. Parents and guardians should consider their children's ages, experience and skills in deciding whether to allow them to walk without adult supervision to and/or from a parish program. Every year, parents/guardians must agree to the Unescorted Permission to Walk to Parking Lot Policy below for each child they deem capable of walking to and/or from a parish program of religious education/formation.

By choosing "yes" on our registration form, you give your child in grade 6, 7 or 8 permission to walk without adult supervision to and/or from the parish religious education program building to your car, in the parking lot. Additionally, you assume the responsibility to ensure that your child knows and will follow traffic safety rules. Your "yes" states that you release the Diocese of Metuchen, the Parish of Immaculate Conception, Annandale, and any and all of their representatives or agents from any and all claims or liability arising from, or related to, your child's travel to and/or from the parish religious education program. If you choose "no", or do not choose any option, your child will not be released to the parking lot, but be required to wait in the supervised parent pick up line so that you can come into the building and pick your child up at dismissal.

## **Schedules/Programs**

### **School Year Program Options for Grades 1-8:**

- Meets weekly for 1.25 hours
- Monday Afternoons: 4:30-5:45PM
- Monday Evenings: 6:30-7:45PM

### **Summer Program for Grades 3-7**

- ❖ Condensed-Model program with an Intense Course of Study
- ❖ Classes for 10 consecutive days, excluding weekends (dates vary by year):
  - Weekdays 9:00AM – 12:30PM
- ❖ Additional Events and 5 Family Spiritual Exercises required
  - **For 2023-2024:** 4 Family Spiritual Exercises are required.



## Registration and Terms

Registration is for currently registered ICC parishioners only. Siblings will be placed into the same program and will not be split up into different sessions or programs unless the family requests otherwise. Registration uses a lottery based process which occurs after the registration deadline.

Families of Multiples (Twins, Triplets, Etc.) please note: Unless you request otherwise, we will place your multiples into the same class.

### Summer Program

- Registration for the Summer Program usually takes place in late January, but can vary based on current circumstances and staffing. All current PREP families will be notified, via email, of the date Registration opens and closes.
- Registration deadlines for the Summer Program are firm.
- No registration is accepted after the deadline.
- Payment is due 'in full' at the time of registration, and registration is not completed without payment.
- New families and those re-registering for the Parish, must enroll in the School Year Program for one year prior to registering for Summer PREP.
- Placement in our Summer Program is lottery based for every family:
  - Only the children of committed volunteers in the Summer Program will be guaranteed placement in the Summer Program, and only if we have enough volunteers to run the grade, or program.
  - If a volunteer finds they need to withdraw their commitment prior to, or during the Summer program, their children will automatically be pulled out of the Summer Program and will be placed into which ever session of the School Year Program has availability at the time.

### School Year Program

- School Year Program Registration usually takes place mid-March, but can vary based on current circumstances and staffing. All current PREP families will be notified, via email, of the date Registration opens and closes.
- Payment is due in full at the time of registration and registration is not completed without payment.
- A \$25 discount is offered to families who register before the program registration deadline.
- While all families are placed into a lottery in terms of Session placement, those families who register by the program deadline will receive priority of their first choice. Families who register after the program deadline will not be placed into classes until all other currently registered families have been placed.
- All committed volunteers in the School Year Program receive guaranteed placement for their children in the session of their choice in the School Year Program, provided we have enough volunteers to run the grade, or program.
- Registration received after the program deadline will not be eligible for the discount, nor first choice preference of session placement. Late registrants will be placed on a waiting list and dependent upon Catechist and space availability. Late registrants are not guaranteed placement in the program.
- *Re-Registration received after June 1 will additionally be charged a \$75 late fee. (Late fees are not applicable to new families).*
- Once classes are scheduled, switching classes is highly discouraged and not usually possible due to full classes. *(Any scheduling changes after June 1 will incur an additional \$75 change fee.)*
- *Re-Registration permanently closes for the school year in mid-August; all late fees apply to re-registering families and we cannot guarantee your first choice session placement. (New families, please see the 'New Students and New Families' page in this handbook for information.)*

## Financial Concerns

- All financial assistance requests are received with compassion and remain confidential.
- No family will be denied a Religious Education due to financial concerns.
- All requests for financial assistance must be received before your program's deadline.
- Parents must speak to the Parish Catechetical Leader every year that confidential financial assistance is requested.
- All requests for financial assistance must meet the Diocesan requirements for financial eligibility.

## Refunds

Tuition and sacrament fees are non-refundable. However, if you volunteer for a program after you have already registered and paid, we will be happy to reimburse you as per our volunteer discount guidelines, dependent upon the program for which you are volunteering. Please see your specific program discount for details.

## Donations

*Donations are always graciously accepted* and will be applied toward the registration of those students who cannot afford tuition, as well as to offset costs the parish incurs for volunteer's Background Checks, and other Religious Education needs.

## Sacramental Preparation at ICC

We require all Grades, 1-8, to be completed in Religious Education studies. Sacramental Preparation for children is a two-year process for baptized Catholics no matter the age or grade level of the child. This is a Diocesan requirement.

At ICC, First Holy Communion Preparation traditionally begins in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade (Communion 1) and continues in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade (Communion 2). The children receive their First Reconciliation between January and April in Communion 2. First Holy Communion is received in the Spring of Communion 2.

Confirmation preparation begins in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade (Confirmation 1), continues in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (Confirmation 2) and the children receive their Confirmation in the Spring of Confirmation 2.

This is the normal protocol for most parishes in the United States.

Sacrament Information Meetings are held each year for those students who will be receiving sacraments. Since each child is unique, and every year is slightly different, these meetings are required for every parent of a child receiving sacraments that year, whether or not they have previously attended a sacrament meeting for another child. Sacrament meetings provide all required event dates, dress codes and mandatory requirements necessary. Parents will be notified once the meeting dates are determined. Some meetings are for students and parents and some meetings are for parents only. We will notify you via email when the time comes.

See information specific to your child's grade on the following pages.

**Special Note:** *Children in grades other than those listed above, that perhaps have missed a grade, and have not yet received their sacraments, should contact the Parish Catechetical Leader directly for information on the next steps for their child.*



## Communion 1

(Usually 1<sup>st</sup> Grade)

### First Reconciliation & First Communion Program

- Communion 1 is the first required year of formal Religious Education in preparation for the above mentioned sacraments.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Graders receive class instruction during their regular session only. There is no additional preparation outside the classroom. Parents of students who are not in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, must speak to the PCL for directives.
- Parents must ensure children are learning their Communion 1 assigned prayers at home. Prayers are found at the end of this Handbook.
- Memorization of the Communion 2 Prayer list is encouraged during the summer months between Communion 1 and Communion 2.

## Communion 2

(Usually 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

### First Reconciliation & First Communion Program

- Brief parent meeting, in early fall. A schedule of all dates, and sacrament details, are provided at this meeting.
- Parents must ensure children are learning their assigned prayers at home. Prayers can be found at the end of this Handbook.
- First Reconciliation is received during the second half of the school year. This service lasts approximately 75 minutes.
- First Communion Banners are made on your own (*with our directives*) and are due at First Reconciliation.
- If deemed necessary by the Pastor and the Parish Catechetical Leader: First Communion rehearsal will be held as directed.
- First Communion has traditionally been received in our parish at a Saturday morning Mass in the Spring/after Easter. This Mass lasts approximately 60 minutes.

## Confirmation 1

(Usually 7<sup>th</sup> Grade)

In preparation of Confirmation 1: At the end of 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, in preparation for the upcoming year, a parent and student meeting is held, after which, students begin working towards 20 Confirmation Stewardship Service Hours\*.

For the Confirmation 1 School Year (Usually Grade 7):

- Students participate in and complete first year of Confirmation preparation.
- 10 of the above mentioned Service Hours\* are due by January 15<sup>th</sup> of 7<sup>th</sup> Grade. Please email your service record to: [PrepServiceHours@lccAnnandale.org](mailto:PrepServiceHours@lccAnnandale.org)
- Spring of Confirmation 1, a parent and student meeting is held to provide details for the following requirements:
  - Confirmation Saint's Name Report assigned
  - Confirmation Stewardship Service Hours discussed (refresher/reminders)
- Sponsor selection and Sponsor Certificate of Eligibility requirements assigned
- Date announced for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation Retreat with Parent or adult Sponsor over 18 (if date is known)
- Successfully pass Cumulative Faith Formation Test:
  - This test is the cumulative knowledge of the child's faith based on the Family's own life of faith lived at home, in the community and in the Church, as well as the knowledge learned at PREP in Grades 1-6.
  - PREP provides study materials for home study only. We do not "teach to the test" in class.
  - Study materials are provided with ample time to study prior to the test, which takes place in the latter part of the PREP year. **2023-2024: This test will be delayed and administered within the first two weeks of Confirmation 2 PREP. A Study guide will be emailed home in late August.**

## Confirmation 2

(Usually 8<sup>th</sup> Grade)

- Pre-Requisite: Complete Confirmation One Religious Education & it's requirements
- Due to PREP Office no later than September 1:
  - Confirmation Saint Name Report
  - Sponsor Certificate of Eligibility
- Confirmation Retreat with Parent or adult Sponsor over 18
- Theology of the Body and/or Chastity Event for parents and students
- Required Parent and Student Meeting in early fall of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, will provide details and dates for the following additional requirements:
  - Sacrament of Confirmation on-line Registration
  - *If deemed necessary by the Pastor and Parish Catechetical Leader: Confirmation Rehearsal with Sponsor (or Sponsor Representative)*
  - Confirmation dates and times are determined by the Bishop; we will notify you when we know.
  - **Final 10 of 20 'Confirmation Stewardship Service Hours' due by January of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade.**  
*Reminder: Hours not turned in, within 90 days of completion, will not be counted. Please always keep a copy for your records.*
  - **Please email your service record to our Confirmation Coordinator:**  
**[PrepServiceHours@lccAnnandale.org](mailto:PrepServiceHours@lccAnnandale.org)**
  - \*Earning or Working on 'Confirmation Stewardship Service Hours' is not permitted during classroom time.
  - Final hours are due by January 15<sup>th</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade year.

# Allergies That Require Epi-Pens

Due to legal reasons, and to protect our precious children, carefully read the information below.

**Please note:** While we do not permit food in PREP, we do share our classrooms with other PREP Classes, as well as our parish's Parochial School. The students who attend our parish school do often have food in their classrooms; including at the student's desks. It may not be possible for us to be aware of, or prevent, cross contamination and it is important for you to send your child in with their Epi-Pen if their physician has prescribed an Epi-Pen for them in case of a life threatening emergency. If your child's physician previously required an Epi-Pen for the previous school year, but no longer requires your child to have one now, for our records, you are required to provide a signed waiver from your physician notifying us of this change.

The following 2 forms are included with each registration packet.

## 1. Authorization to Administer Epinephrine

- This form MUST be completed and signed each school year by your child's pediatrician/family physician.  
(Family members who are physicians cannot be the signatory on the Authorization form.)
- This form provides us permission to administer the Epi-Pen if:
  - Your child is not trained how to self administer AND/OR
  - In the event your child is having a medical emergency and is not conscious and thus, not able, to self-administer.
- This form MUST be returned to the PREP office to allow your child to attend PREP.
- This form MUST be returned to the PREP office within 30 days of your registration to ensure your preferred program session.

## 2. Self-Administer of Medication

- This form MUST be returned to the PREP office, ONLY if your child self-administers the Epi-Pen.
- If your child self-administers the Epi-Pen, this form MUST be returned to the PREP office within 30 days of your registration to allow your child to attend PREP.

### IMPORTANT:

- If your child's physician prescribes an Epi Pen for your child, then you are required to have your physician complete the Epi-Pen Forms and return them to us.
- All children with Epi-Pens MUST carry their Epi-Pen with them at ALL times. The PREP office will not store or hold Epi-Pens.
- The PREP program tries to staff volunteer nurses during PREP sessions. However, if a volunteer nurse is NOT available during your child's session, a parent MUST be present during the entire PREP session for your child's safety.
- If you are experiencing problems with your physician returning the required medical forms to you in a timely manner which may impact your desired program session or your child's ability to participate in PREP, please let us know ASAP.
- If your child requires an Epi Pen, and you are not willing to provide a release form, then you must complete all volunteer requirements including trainings and background checks, and will need to be present at every class, or for your child's own safety, your child will not be permitted to attend PREP.
- Completed Epi-Pen forms must be returned to the PREP Office well in advance of the start of your child's upcoming session. Forms due:
  - Summer PREP: No later than June 1
  - School Year PREP (including Sundays): No later than September 1

## New Students and New Families

- Families participating in our programs are required to be registered parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish. For parish registration information, please contact the Parish Office at 908-735-7319.
- Every new student must email a photo of their child's Baptismal Certificate by September 1.
- If your child has received the additional sacraments of First Reconciliation and/or First Communion in another parish, you must additionally provide copies of those certificates by September 1.
- All children transferring from programs in other parishes must also provide documentation from their previous parish stating their level of completion by September 1. This is common practice in Religious Ed offices and your former parish will be able to provide you with a letter of completion/transfer.
- Families who are moving mid-year and have a student currently enrolled in another parish's Religious Education Program may transfer into our program at any time during the same school year, as long as we have space within our existing classes. Please also provide the above documentation.
- New or re-registering families are not permitted into our Summer Program until they have first completed one full year of our School Year program.
- Late fees do not apply to new families.

# Required Prayers

It is the responsibility of every parent to teach and ensure their child memorizes the following prayers, which will be tested in class:

## Basic Prayers by Grade Level

- *1<sup>st</sup> Graders/Communion 1 should know:*
  - *Before beginning class in September: Sign of the Cross and Hail Mary*
  - *By December of Communion 1: The Our Father/Lord's prayer*
  - *By March of Communion 1: Glory Be/Doxology*
- *Students in all other grades should have already memorized the prayers on this page; continue reading for required prayers for other grade levels.*

### Sign of the Cross

*(use the thumb, pointer finger and middle finger of the right hand.)*

In the name of the Father, *(touch the forehead)*

And of the Son, *(touch the chest)*

And of the Holy... *(touch the left shoulder)*

Spirit. Amen. *(touch the right shoulder)*

### Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;  
blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### Glory Be (Doxology)

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*(continued)*

**By December of Communion 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, all students should know the above, and:**

### **Act of Contrition**

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong,  
and in failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you  
whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help  
To do penance, to sin no more  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

**By December of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, all students should know the above, and:**

### **Grace (before meals)**

Bless us, O Lord!  
And these thy gifts,  
Which we are about to receive  
From thy bounty,  
Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

### **Fatima Prayer** *(prayed at the conclusion of each decade of the Rosary)*

O my Jesus,  
forgive us our sins,  
save us from the fires of Hell.  
Lead all souls to Heaven,  
especially those most in need of Thy mercy. Amen.

**By December of 4th Grade, all students should know the above, and:**

### **Apostle's Creed**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

*(continued)*

**By December of 5th Grade, all students should know the above, and:**

## **Hail Holy Queen**

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope.  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.  
To thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.  
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us,  
and after this, our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.  
Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.  
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

**By December of 6th Grade, all students should know the above, and:**

## **St. Michael the Archangel**

St. Michael the Archangel,  
Defend us in battle.  
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.  
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,  
And do thou,  
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,  
By the power of God,  
Thrust into Hell, Satan,  
And all the evil spirits,  
Who prowl about the world  
Seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

**How to pray the Rosary, and begin to memorize the Mysteries of the Rosary.**

## **Mysteries of the Rosary**

MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY			
JOYFUL	LUMINOUS	SORROWFUL	GLORIOUS
Mondays & Saturdays and Sundays of Advent	Thursdays	Tuesdays & Fridays Sundays of Lent	Wednesdays & Sundays
1. The Annunciation 2. The Visitation 3. The Nativity 4. The Presentation 5. Finding of Jesus in the Temple	1. Baptism in the Jordan 2. Wedding at Cana 3. Proclamation of the Kingdom of God 4. Transfiguration 5. Institution of the Eucharist	1. Agony in the Garden 2. Scourging at the Pillar 3. Crowning with Thorns 4. Carrying of the Cross 5. Crucifixion	1. The Resurrection 2. The Ascension 3. Descent of the Holy Spirit 4. The Assumption 5. The Coronation
THINK OF ONE MYSTERY WHILE SAYING A COMPLETE DECADE			

Credit: USGraceforce.com

(continued)

**By December of 7th Grade, all students above should know:**

## **Nicene Creed**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**By December of 8th Grade, all students should know:**

**All of the above prayers, and how to independently pray via Lectio Divina.**



Thank you for all you do to support our PREP programs and raise your children in our Roman Catholic faith. We know it isn't easy in today's culture, but we are here to support you.

We look forward to another amazing, Spirit filled year, together!

God Bless,  
The PREP Office Staff

Coleen M. D'Amato, Parish Catechetical Leader  
Mrs. Jen Senkowski, temporary Assistant Director & Confirmation Coordinator  
Maryann Procopio, Administrative Assistant

PREP@ICCAnnandale.org  
908-735-0478

Office Hours: 9:30-4, Monday – Thursday  
Summer Hours: 9-12, Monday - Thursday

### **A Parent's Prayer** [Loyolapress.com](http://Loyolapress.com)

Loving God, You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings.  
We thank and praise you. Thank you for the gift of our children.

Help us to set boundaries for them, and yet encourage them to explore. Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh start.

May our children come to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love, so they may know peace, truth, and goodness.

May their ears hear your voice.

May their eyes see your presence in all things.

May their lips proclaim your word.

May their hearts be your dwelling place.

May their hands do works of charity.

May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ,  
your Son and our Lord.

Amen.