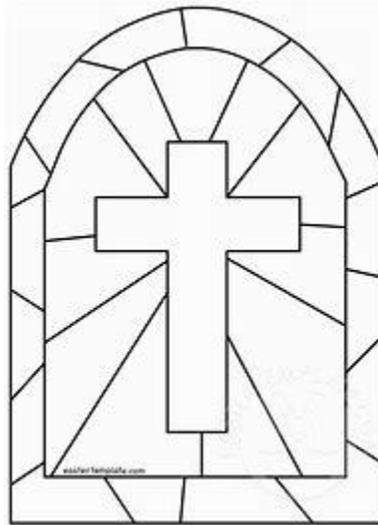


Parish Mission Statement

The Church of the Assumption B.V.M. is dedicated to becoming a community of disciples of Jesus Christ. As disciples, we make Jesus Christ a living reality in the lives of the members of our parish family. By guiding and encouraging our people to discipleship through a heightened awareness of the Lord's presence in their lives, the parish community becomes a visible and active expression of the living Christ in our world today.

Assumption BVM Parish Religious Education Program Handbook, 2022-2023

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in the darkness." - *John 8:12*



Live as children who belong in the light. -*Ephesians 5:8*

Reverend Monsignor Nevin Klinger, Pastor

Christina B. Durback, Director of Religious Education

Religious Education Office

4101 Old Bethlehem Pike
Bethlehem, PA 18015
Telephone: 610-814-0712

Religious Education Office Hours:

Sunday: 8 – 9:45 a.m.
Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Wednesday: also 4:30-6 p.m.)
and by appointment

Religious Education Office e-mail

Christina Durback: Durback@ptd.net

Parish Website:

www.assumptionbethlehem.com

2022-2023 PREP Team

Group	Catechists	Aides	Session Day
Genesis A	Dianne Werner	Justin P. and Allison L.	Sun.
Good Shepherd A	Margaret Brock	Melissa Vedder	Sun.
Apostles A	Matthew Ford	O'Neill F. and Garrity F.	Sun.
Apostles C	Leslie Cherry		Wed.
Faith Explorers 1A	Nikki Guerra, Tracy Chaffier		Sun.
Faith Explorers 1C	Laura Fell	Liliana F., Sophia F.	Wed.
Faith Explorers 2A	Tammy Napolitano	Marcia Voth	Sun.
Faith Explorers 2C	Laura Fell	Liliana F., Sophia F.	Wed.
Discipleship 1A	JoAnne Pavolko	Jake P.	Sun.
Discipleship 1C	Frank Lynch, Doreen Reilly		Wed.
Discipleship 2A	Rich Kolecki	Morgan P.	Sun.
Discipleship 2C	Joel Silverthorn		Wed.
Camp Discipleship 2	Christina Durback		August & Wed. mtgs.
Discipleship 3A	Nancy O'Keefe	Gabby S.	Sun.
Camp Discipleship 3	Christina Durback		August & Sunday mtgs.
	Wed. Hospitality Minister: Penelope Tervalon		
Sunday Adult Religious Education	Larry Durback	N.B. Team members where last initial only is given are teen helpers.	Finnegan Room
Office Help	Donna Torres		

Victim Assistance Coordinator Direct Telephone: 800-791-9209

The Diocese of Allentown provides assistance to anyone who, as a minor, was sexually abused by a priest, deacon, or employee/volunteer of the Diocese/Parish. Parents, guardians, children, and survivors of sexual abuse are invited and encouraged to contact the Diocese of Allentown for more information about this program. The fullness of compassion should be extended to these victims by the Church. To learn more about the Diocese of Allentown's Youth Protection Programs, Sexual Abuse Policy, and Code of Conduct, please visit www.allentowndiocese.org and click on "Youth Protection" in the upper right-hand corner of the page.

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator: Ms. Wendy S. Krisak, M.A., NCC, LPC Direct Telephone: 800 791-9209
Office of Safe Environment: Pamela J. Russo, M.S.W., M.S.: 610-871-5200, ex.2204, prusso@allentowndiocese.org

May Our Lady of the Assumption, patroness of our parish, guide us in this new year of religious education. May she intercede for us in our ministry of catechesis, helping us to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, proclaiming His Good News with our words and our very lives. Amen.

Assumption BVM PREP 2022-2023

+ Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season. (2 Tim 4:2)

***Our mission:* Assumption BVM PREP exists to help children and youth in grades 1 – 8 of Assumption Parish discover, accept and respond to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’s love for them, and to assist parents in nurturing the Catholic faith in their sons and daughters.**

+In all Catholic faith formation, regular Mass participation is the essential foundation for effective catechesis.

+ Assumption PREP endeavors, with the help of God’s grace:

- + to provide effective, engaging, holistic religious education, companioning families on their journey of faith, compassionately considering families’ varying needs & situations.*
- + to reinforce in children the religious formation provided first by parents as they strive to raise their children as integrated, committed, Catholic Christians whose faith is evermore living, conscious & active.*
- + to offer children and youth opportunities to experience God’s love, to learn about salvation history and our rich Catholic heritage, to prepare for the celebration of Sacraments, and to find and claim their places as members of God’s Kingdom.*

+Catechists and other parishioners who serve in PREP share the love of God that they have experienced in their own lives, trusting in God’s grace as they commit themselves generously to nurture the faith of Assumption Parish’s children and youth.

+ The Parish Religious Education Program is open to any children of Assumption BVM Parish in school grades 1 – 8 who wish to grow in understanding & practice of their Catholic faith. Assumption Parish offers PREP sessions for youth in all levels on Sunday mornings (8:30 – 9:30 a.m.) & some levels on Wednesday evenings (4:30 -5:30 p.m.).

<u>Children/youth generally in school grade*:</u>	<u>usually participate in PREP level:</u>	<u>which helps youth:</u>
1	Genesis	begin their formal religious education, learning stories and practices of our faith in a faith-filled, age-appropriate community
2 (or 3*)	Good Shepherd	learn about and experience God’s forgiving love as they prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time
3 (or 4*)	Apostles	learn about Jesus’ love & experience God’s gift of his Son as they prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist for the first time
4 5	Faith Explorers 1 Faith Explorers 2	learn more about the Trinity, their relationship with God and the Christian community, the Sacraments, stories of our faith, and their Christian responsibilities and rights
6	Discipleship 1	learn about God’s plan for His people as it unfolds throughout salvation history, studying the Scriptures focusing on the Old Testament
7 (or 8)*	Discipleship 2	learn more about the life of Jesus, the meaning of the beliefs of Catholic Christians contained in our Creed, and the meaning of these beliefs in our lives as they consider the call to discipleship
8 (or 9)*	Discipleship 3	learn about the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives while engaging in immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation

*** Children/youth grade level may vary slightly from what is listed, depending on the child’s previous religious education.**

ABVM also offers various ways for **high school teens** to live out their call to discipleship and to become involved in parish activities. Consult the parish bulletin & website for updates.

God's Word Leads Us:

I have become all things to all, to save at least some.

All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I, too, may have a share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9: 22b-23)

+ As with all Catholic faith formation, regular Mass participation is the essential foundation for effective, meaningful catechesis.

+ As always, we offer a consistent but flexible program, supporting parents in nurturing the Catholic faith in their children.

Program Component	Description	Structure	Details
Weekly "Jesus Lights Our Way" PREP Sessions	+All will gather in person in the Hanlon Center in St. Michael the Archangel Religious Education Center and begin with prayer.	+ Session Structure: 60 minutes: 10 minutes: Welcome, "God-chat," and opening prayer in Hanlon Center 40 minutes: Priority topics session 10 minutes: Wrap up, closing prayer	+ Children are asked to bring all PREP materials to each session. + Please be on time & stay the whole time! + Health and Safety Protocols: as directed by the Diocese of Allentown Office of Education (*see below)
Faith Facts Challenges and Activities	+ Children/youth will have activities to do at home (with some parental assistance) to ensure children's satisfactory progress in meeting religious education objectives for their level.	+ Once or twice a year, completed at home + Submitted to PREP on or before assigned due date(s)	+ Will include cognitive, affective and behavioral objectives as presented in the Diocese of Allentown's Religious Education Curriculum + This provides a connection between faith formation at home and at PREP.
Eucharistic Adoration	+ Families gather in church for a time of prayer and reflection before the Blessed Sacrament.	+ Once a year, 45 minutes + Begins with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and a reflection shared by one of our deacons + Quiet prayer time, with age-appropriate prayer booklets available for all family members + Concludes with Benediction	+ Considered a PREP session + Attendance will be taken
Stations of the Cross	+ Members of the PREP community lead and participate in parish Stations of the Cross on a Friday of Lent.	+ Stations of the Cross and Benediction prayed in the traditional Catholic way	+ Considered a PREP session + Attendance will be taken + Families have the option of attending another evening if the date for PREP Stations is not conducive to their schedules.
Child Protection Catechesis; "Circle of Grace"	+ Program to promote children's safe interaction with others as required by the Diocese of Allentown	+ According to format approved by the Diocese of Allentown	+ Dates for these sessions are on the PREP calendar. + Parents may "opt out;" written form required.
Weekly Participation in the Lord's Day celebration of Eucharist	+The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1324) + "Time with Jesus is never wasted." (St. John Paul II)	+Mass times at Assumption: Saturday evening: 5 p.m. Sunday morning: 8, 10 & 11:30 a.m. +Mass at any Catholic parish is good, too!	+The essential foundation for effective, meaningful catechesis. +We urge and encourage you to make this the priority in your family's ongoing journey of faith. Jesus invites us all to be renewed and strengthened by his love. Join the Catholic community for Mass each week.

*From the Diocese of Allentown Superintendent of Catholic Education, 8/28/22 (adapted for PREP):

The updates in our Health and Safety Plan reflect the most recent guidance which primarily focus on individuals who have tested positive or who have symptoms of COVID-19. [PREP children/ youth and volunteers] who show symptoms of COVID-19 are required to stay home and should get tested. [PREP children/ youth and volunteers] who test positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate at home for 5 days. The [child or volunteer] may return to [PREP] on Day 6 if symptoms have improved and they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. [PREP children/ youth and volunteers] are encouraged to test before returning. [PREP children/ youth and volunteers] returning to PREP after isolation must wear a well-fitted mask from Days 6 through 10.

Individuals returning to PREP from isolation must also remain masked for sports and other extracurricular activities for Days 6-10. We will no longer identify, or quarantine close contacts, and schools/religious ed programs will not be conducting contact tracing. Personnel will continue to encourage students to wash their hands, clean and disinfect lunch tables, desks and high-touch areas, as well as maintain a thorough maintenance program. The availability of hand sanitizer and good ventilation protocols are also encouraged.

Assumption BVM PREP Guidelines and Procedures
(Topics are listed alphabetically for your convenience.)

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures: Please cooperate with these procedures to facilitate safe arrival & dismissal.

Arrival: *We respectfully ask that families make every effort to be on time. Prompt arrival of all PREP members helps sessions to run more successfully. Opening prayer begins at 8:45 a.m. (Sunday) and 4:30 p.m. (Wed.).*

- ❖ Please use the south door (near cornfield) or courtyard door to enter the building. If using the courtyard door, please pull into a parking space before the children leave the car. *Do not stop your car in the middle of the parking lot on the church side of the building.* If using the south door, parents/drivers may drop off children/youth near the steps. Please do not pull up on the painted walkway areas. Please use caution when stopping to drop off children and when leaving, as children and youth will be walking on the designated areas.
- ❖ Youth are to proceed to the Hanlon Center and wait for opening prayer.
- ❖ *Children and youth who arrive later than 10 minutes after a session begins should enter the building using the courtyard door and report to the Religious Education Office to have their names removed from the absentee lists before going to their respective session rooms.*
- ❖ Please note that for the safety of our children, only the south and courtyard doors are entrance doors to the building. *No doors will be open during sessions.*

Dismissal:

- *Please do be prompt in picking up children at the regular dismissal time.*
- If you have regular carpool arrangements for your child(ren), note this on the emergency cards.
- *If you have special arrangements for pick up for a particular session, please notify us in writing.*
- Please be patient and cautious. If everyone exercises extra caution, dismissal will run smoothly and promptly.
- ***Early dismissals are discouraged, as this is disruptive to the flow of the session for all involved. If you must remove your child early from a session, you must notify us at least 30 minutes before the session begins. Come to the Religious Education Office door to pick your child up, then we will get your child from his/her session room. We will not allow a child to wait alone outside or at a door to be picked up early.***
- ***Dismissal procedure:***
 - Please line up cars SINGLE FILE beginning at the dismissal (south) door. The first 5-8 cars can line up by the building. ***Other cars please wait in the parking spaces in the 3rd and 4th rows behind the Hanlon Center and file into the line once dismissal has begun.***
 - Have a ***large, boldly printed sign of your family name*** (and if applicable, the word “carpool”) that can be read from about 15 feet on the dashboard.
 - When you pull up to the steps, we will announce your family name (and “carpool,” if applicable) over the intercom. The children come out to you as quickly as possible.
 - If everyone is ***patient and cautious***, this will go smoothly.
- ❖ Ten minutes after dismissal, remaining children will be taken to the Religious Education Office to contact parents.
- ❖ Note for ***Sunday groups: If your family will attend the 10 a.m. Mass:***
 - ✦ Faith Explorers and Discipleship (grades 4 – 8) children and youth may go to the session rooms of Genesis, Good Shepherd and Apostles (Grades 1-3) siblings, pick them up and proceed to the church *cautiously*.
 - ✦ Parents of children in Genesis, Good Shepherd and Apostles children may also meet their children at the north door (door near Blessed Mother Statue) and walk over to church.

Attendance

Children’s consistent participation in religious education sessions offers significant benefits to their spiritual formation. Please ensure that your children are consistent in attending PREP sessions whenever possible, as an essential element of forming a strong community is the members’ presence to and with one another. If children are unable to attend, parents, please ensure that the material for that session is covered at home during the following week. Catechists are happy to provide information about what was covered. ******Each PREP participant is allowed a total of 3 unexcused absences during the PREP season. The DRE determines what constitutes an excused absence.***

Cancellation of Sessions: *DO NOT CALL THE ABVM PARISH OFFICE FOR CANCELLATION INFORMATION.*

Sundays: If session is cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergency, you will receive a ***group e-mail notification.***

Weds: If St. Michael School is cancelled/dismissses early, PREP is cancelled that day. Check wfmz.com or TV channel 69.

Catechesis for a Safe Environment – “Circle of Grace:” Each person is precious, created in God’s image and likeness. A yearly session for PREP youth helps them to learn that God wants them to experience His love through those who treat them with Christian care. Children/youth learn ways to discern safe or unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. Lesson plans are available for parent perusal in the Religious Education Office. *Parents/guardians choosing not to have children participate in this program must submit their requests in writing to the Religious Education Office two weeks prior to their sons’/daughters’ scheduled session(s). Dates for Child Protection Catechesis Sessions are listed on the PREP Calendar.*

Catechists and Aides: A catechist is “one who echoes the good news.” *Parents are the first catechists* of their children as they strive to be loving examples of Catholic Christian living. ABVM PREP catechists are adult parish members who assist parents in the faith formation of their children by giving their time and talent to share the Good News with parish children and youth each week. They prepare and lead sessions for children and youth, attend PREP team meetings, comply with Diocesan policies and procedures regarding clearances and safe environment training, continue their own spiritual formation and work together to make ABVM PREP a faith community that invites young people to grow in faith. PREP aides assist catechists in various ways during sessions. We ask for your prayerful and practical support for these men, women and teens. Express your gratitude for their efforts by ensuring your child(ren)’s consistent attendance and encouraging their cooperative participation at PREP. We also ask you to consider: is God calling **you** to this ministry?

Children’s Liturgy of the Word: Children ages 4 – 9 may participate in the Children’s Liturgy of the Word offered during 10:00 a.m. Sunday Masses October - May. Children join the entire congregation for the Mass, and go to another space for the Liturgy of the Word. Leaders proclaim readings from the Children’s Lectionary and offer age-appropriate reflections on the Word. Please consider serving in this ministry.

Children with Special Needs: ABVM PREP welcomes all children and supports parents in their children’s religious formation. Making the Director of Religious Education aware of your child’s special needs enables us to make the necessary accommodations to share the Good News with your child appropriately and effectively. Each person has something to share; we endeavor to help each child share his/her gifts and experience God’s love.

Curriculum and Objectives: The *Religious Education Curriculum of the Diocese of Allentown*, revised in 2009, provides objectives for children in each level of religious education. Objectives are organized in cognitive (knowledge), affective (values and attitudes) and behavioral categories to promote integrated faith formation for our children and youth. Priority topics for each level are included in this handbook (p. 9) for your information. Our program offers youth communal, age-appropriate experiences of learning about God and the Catholic faith in accord with these guidelines. For Genesis, Good Shepherd and Faith Explorers groups, sessions focus on the Sunday Gospels and Catholic teachings connected with the readings for Mass. A weekly Gospel magazine and the supplemental text highlight important ideas and doctrine connected with the liturgical Scripture texts. Discipleship 1 and 2 youth use Sacred Scripture. Good Shepherd, Apostles, and Discipleship 3 sessions also include instruction about and preparation for celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation respectively, and the youth in these groups use materials that support sacramental preparation.

CYO: Participation in St. Michael CYO is open to all the children and youth of St. Joseph and Assumption parishes. CYO activities include various sports, drama, an academic bowl, spelling bees, and a religious award program. For more information or to register, go to www.st-mikes.com & click on CYO.

Emergency Cards

Parents/guardians are to complete a family emergency card (*one card per family*). Please include emergency contact information, an authorized list of adults that can pick up your child(ren), food or other allergies or medical conditions, or anything else that we might need to know. Please submit these cards as soon as possible. These cards are kept in the Religious Education Office. Information is shared with catechists as needed and appropriate.

Eucharistic Adoration: Celebrating Jesus’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament (*consult PREP calendar for date*) Since ***Eucharist is the center of our Catholic Christian community***, we offer families an experience of the valuable Catholic tradition of praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament that will:

+ help children grow in **prayerfulness and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament** with respect to their developmental needs, + encourage children and adults to value time spent in prayerful adoration of Jesus.

We will provide brief periods of communal prayer, reflection, soft music, and/or reflection/activity sheets in keeping with the liturgical season. Quiet time will allow individuals to speak and to listen to Jesus in their hearts.

+ Eucharistic Adoration is counted as a regular PREP session. Families (PREP participants and at least one parent) should attend at least Eucharistic Adoration session during the PREP season. Not attending one of these during the year is counted as one absence. Attendance will be taken using a family sign in sheet.

Faith Formation for Adults: Formation in faith is a lifelong process. We invite parents of PREP children and other adults to participate in adult religious education sessions held concurrent with PREP sessions. Join other adults in learning more about our Catholic faith while your children attend PREP, or at any of the other adult faith formation programs offered at our parish. Consult the bulletin/ parish website for more information.

Handbook Acknowledgement Form: In an effort to be environmentally conscientious, we publish the PREP Family handbook on the parish website. We ask all parents to read the handbook carefully and sign a form (distributed at orientation) indicating that they have read the handbook and will make a sincere effort to comply with the policies therein.

Outreach

Assumption PREP encourages youth to love and to serve others as Jesus did. Various activities help children to serve people in our parish, our local area, and our world. Outreach activities include but are not limited to:

- ✦ An ongoing **Food Drive** in which ABVM children collect food items for St. Paul Food Bank, Allentown, & Betty Lou's Food Pantry, Coopersburg. Items for each month are listed on the PREP calendar.
- ✦ Participation in the **Missionary Childhood Association**, the Catholic Church's mission organization for youth. Children make monetary donations to MCA during October (World Mission month) and Lent. We encourage children to offer prayers and sacrifices for children in mission countries at any time, and will periodically highlight this aspect of growing in missionary spirit in sessions.
- ✦ Donations to the **Sassy Massey Smiles Foundation** in memory of Jillian Massey, a parishioner who taught us much about bringing happiness and God's love to others before she went to heaven in 2017.

Parent Involvement: *Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children. The catechesis given by parents with the family "precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other forms of catechesis."* (National Directory for Catechesis)

PREP exists to support parents in nurturing their child's faith development. Parents' active leadership in the faith formation of their child(ren) is essential to the young person's holistic development as a Catholic Christian. In our collaborative effort to help children grow and develop into Catholic Christians whose faith is living, conscious, & active, we encourage **parents** to:

- 📖 **Be consistent in participating in Eucharist each week as a family.**
- 📖 Ensure that your children (and you!) participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly.
- 📖 Reflect and pray with the PREP Community by reviewing content of PREP sessions with their children and praying prayers in their folders.
- 📖 Help children to memorize the prayers & teachings listed on memorization checklists in their PREP folders.
- 📖 Respectfully offer feedback and pose questions to us to keep communication lines open.
- 📖 Pray for our catechists & express your gratitude for their assistance in your child(ren)'s faith formation.
- 📖 Cooperate with PREP policies and procedures, recognizing that they have been developed for the benefit of individual children and for the common good.
- 📖 Check the folders of their youngest/only child in PREP **every week** for communications we may have sent home. Please read these communications and respond when necessary.
- 📖 Read e-mail communications your DRE and/or child/ren's catechists may send to keep you informed of the happenings in your child/ren's PREP groups.
- 📖 Consider sharing your time and talents by serving as a catechist, aide, or office helper

Participant Responsibilities (with guidance from their parents)

To help our PREP community accomplish its mission, we ask all to cooperate in these ways:

- 📖 Each person is responsible for creating the best Christian community possible. Session leaders and aides give generously of their time and talents for PREP. PREP children/youth, in turn, are responsible for being respectful and cooperative during sessions. All are encouraged to contribute their thoughts and ideas, and talents to sessions. If a young person's actions weaken the community, the session leader will encourage his/her cooperation and positive participation. If this fails, the Director of Religious Education may intervene. Parents/guardians may be called to help the child recognize how his/her actions are detrimental to the community and to consider ways to help the child grow as a builder of Christian community.
- 📖 If a session leader requests group members to reflect on or complete something at home or to bring in certain materials, we ask that participants make a sincere effort to comply.
- 📖 Each participant receives a folder that includes materials that are to be brought to all sessions. Faith Explorers 2, Discipleship 1,2 & 3 members are to bring their *Breakthrough Bible* to each session as well.
- 📖 A generous donor has provided carrying bags for our PREP members. Each child receives a bag when he/she joins PREP. Replacement bags are available for \$3.

Photo Agreement: When having special events at PREP, we may take photos to display around the parish or to accompany articles we may send for publication to the local newspapers or the *AD Times*. If you do not want your child/children's pictures used in this manner, please indicate that on the Handbook Acknowledgement Form.

Prayer Intentions: As a community of faith, we believe that it is important to support one another in prayer. E-mail your intentions to the DRE at durback@ptd.net, and we will do our best to include them in the prayers of our PREP community.

Registration: PREP registration for current parishioners is April through June. New families are urged to register as soon as they join the parish. Forms are available on the parish website or in the parish office. Prompt return of these forms increase a family's possibility of being assigned to their preferred PREP session. Those who return forms after June 30 (exceptions may be made for new members) may be charged a late fee. Anyone who requests a change of PREP session day after August 15 may be charged a \$15 clerical fee for each child whose session day will be changed. Arrangements can be made for families in need of financial assistance. Send questions to prepregcoord@gmail.com.

Release Time: Under Section 1546 of the Public School Code (as amended by Act 175 of 1982), parents can request that their children be excused from school for a religious act of worship. Thus, you may request that your child be excused from school to attend the 9 a.m. or noon Mass on a holy day.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Parents are encouraged to fulfill their Catholic parental responsibilities by giving their children the opportunity to celebrate this Sacrament frequently. Consult the bulletin or parish website for times when the parish offers this Sacrament. Children and youth usually have the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during a PREP session at least once a season, depending upon the availability of priests.

Sacramental Preparation Policy & Processes

*The Sacraments are celebrations of God's power and presence active in the lives of individuals and the Christian community. They proclaim, make explicit, and celebrate God's grace in the life of those receiving them. Sacraments are significant moments in a lifelong, ongoing process of growing in faith, hope and love with Jesus Christ. Processes of preparation for Sacraments are essential to the ongoing faith formation in the lives of children and youth. The goal of these processes for the young people of ABVM is not only reception of a particular Sacrament; more important is the person's continuous Catholic Christian development whose faith is maturing into the living, conscious, active belief of an adult disciple of Jesus Christ. In light of this philosophy, the ideal situation for a child to enter the process of sacramental preparation is one in which he/she is consistently attending a religious education/formation program throughout his/her youth. Thus, **Assumption Parish requires that a child entering a sacramental preparation process consistently participate in religious education sessions for at least one year prior to entering the preparation for a Sacrament.** (For new parishioners, participation in the religious education program at their previous parish is acceptable.)*

Good Shepherd (Grade 2) group members prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time.

Apostles (Grade 3) group members prepare to receive the Sacrament of Eucharist for the first time.

Discipleship 2 and 3 (Grades 7 and 8) youth prepare for full initiation into the Catholic Christian community as they prepare for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation during a **two- year process**.

For parents/guardians whose children are involved in a sacramental preparation process, a parent/guardian gathering for each Sacrament provide theological updates, discussion, and community building. We encourage parents/guardians (and Confirmation candidates) to attend their respective sessions that can enrich the whole family's celebration of the Sacrament.

Special Sacramental Preparation for Children and Youth: Some children in our community have not celebrated the Sacraments of Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and/or Confirmation at the ages children commonly celebrate these rites. ABVM provides these children with the age-appropriate formation needed to celebrate any of these Sacraments. Day and times of sessions depend on the participants' and catechists' schedules. Contact the DRE for more information.

Scripture Reading: PREP youth begin to use the Bible in the Faith Explorers 2. Each participant should purchase a Bible for a nominal fee in addition to the registration fee. Participants in Faith Explorers 2 and Discipleship 1, 2 and 3 are responsible to bring Bibles to all sessions.

Snacks: Due to allergy concerns, no snacks will be offered during PREP except with notification and permission of parents. A catechist may provide a snack for children/youth to take home from a session with prior approval of parents and the DRE.

Spiritual Library: The ABVM Spiritual Library in the Jubilee Center offers books, tapes, and videos for adults and children on a variety of topics including theology, spirituality, prayer, lives of the saints, and Christian living. Visit this valuable parish resource and check out some of the materials that may be borrowed.

Technological Devices Policy: Our world today offers many exciting, instant means of communication and technological devices. We recognize the value for good of these devices, but we prefer that PREP participants refrain from bringing them to PREP. If your family practice is to have your child/children carry a communication device at all times, we will not oppose your family's policy. However, **PREP participants are to have all cell phones and any other technological devices turned off during PREP sessions.** If any child or youth is found using the device or being otherwise distracted by it during a session, the device will be confiscated and kept safely in the religious education office for the remainder of that session. The parent/guardian of the child can retrieve the device at the conclusion of the session.

Technology and Faith Formation: Many websites can enhance the spiritual development of children, youth, and adults. We invite you to explore some of these sites, including www.loyolapress.com and www.pflaum.com. For adults, thegodminute.org is a wonderful daily prayer reflection that helps us to keep "grounded" as Christians.



Diocese of Allentown Religious Education Curriculum Priority Topics

*The object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ.
(National Directory for Catechesis, Chapter 2, #19B)*

Genesis (Grade 1): God the Creator, Grace, Eternal Life

Good Shepherd (Grade 2): Jesus, Penance and Reconciliation, Eucharist (remote preparation)

Apostles (Grade 3): Church, Creed, Trinity, Sacraments (Basic Knowledge), Preparation for First Eucharist

Faith Explorers 1 (Grade 4): The Holy Spirit, Basic Morality including: The Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes, The Greatest Commandment, The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Faith Explorers 2 (Grade 5): Sacraments and Liturgy

Discipleship 1 (Grade 6): Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)

Discipleship 2 (Grade 7): New Testament (Christian Scriptures) Preparation for Confirmation

Discipleship 3 (Grade 8): The Church: Its Life and History Preparation for Confirmation

+ Preparation for reception for the Sacraments is integrated into instruction in the Good Shepherd, Apostles, and Discipleship groups.

+ Children and youth will have formulas (summarized teachings of our faith) and prayers to memorize at each level as well.

About Memorization: Effective catechesis also incorporates learning “by heart...” While the content of faith cannot be reduced to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood, learning by heart has had a special place in catechesis and should continue to have that place in catechesis today. “The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and the community level. It should be introduced through a process that, begun early, continues gradually, flexibly, and never slavishly. In this way certain elements of the Catholic faith, tradition, and practice are learned for a lifetime, form the basis for communication, allow people to pray together in a common language, and contribute to the individual’s continued growth in understanding and living the faith.

(National Directory for Catechesis, Chapter 4, #29F)

For Parents: We’re supporting you in your vocation as parents!

At Baptism, we celebrate & proclaim our belief that God gifts each person with the gifts of faith, hope, and love. As these core theological virtues are nurtured in each person through the power of the Holy Spirit, with the help of the Catholic Christian community, each Christian grows as Jesus’ faithful disciple, knowing and doing what is good, loving God and others. This is the heart of our Christian mission: echoing the Good News. In a most significant way we live out this vocation as parents & catechists, encouraging our precious young people to grow in that relationship of faith, hope, and love with Jesus and his Church, that each person might contribute to the ongoing revelation of God’s Kingdom in our midst, by acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with God.

An awesome task? Yes. A mission impossible? No! God never calls without supplying the necessary grace to accomplish the aim. At Baptism and Confirmation, God strengthens each of us with whatever is needed to carry out our mission as disciples. In accepting the vocation to be a parent, the primary catechist of your child, you carry out your baptismal call in an exceptional way. God reassures us: “Do not be afraid – I am with you!” (Isaiah 43:5) and will not leave us alone.



Catechesis: What is it? Catechesis is echoing the Good News of Jesus!

The following pages can help you to expand your understanding of catechesis in general, the purpose and goals of our Parish Religious Education Program, and how we hope to support you in your vocation of Catholic Christian parenting. Let's begin with a review of just what catechesis is all about...

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

CCC#4: Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help persons believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing, they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the Body of Christ.

CCC#5: Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people, and adults, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.

CCC #426: [Quoting *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979) (*On Catechesis in Our Time*) by Pope John Paul II]: At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the only son of the Father... full of grace and truth," (John 1:14), who suffered and died for us and who now after rising is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is "the way, the truth, and the life," (John 14:6) and Christian living consists in following Christ. To catechize is "to reveal in the person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him." Catechesis aims at putting "people...in communion ...with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."

According to The National Directory for Catechesis (Chapter 2, #19B):

The object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ.

From *Sacred Scripture*

Thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel. Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name: you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1)

I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Jesus approached [the eleven] and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-19)



What is the of Catechesis?

NURTURING A RELATIONSHIP of LOVE with the HOLY TRINITY

- + A relationship of LOVE that God intends for each person for all eternity
- + Made possible through the saving action of Jesus Christ
- + Celebrated and entered into by each person at Baptism

+ Remember: Relationships involve:

- + Knowledge of the other and of self
- +Attitudes, values and beliefs about the other, self, and the relationship
- +Behaviors – actions

Thus, catechesis for communion with Jesus Christ, leading us to the Father & Holy Spirit, includes:

- + **Cognitive learning:** the "*what*" of faith: an assimilation of knowledge that brings awareness, insight
- + **Affective learning:** the "*so what*" of faith: involves forming of one's feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs that bind us as community and gives purpose, meaning to knowledge
- + **Behavioral learning:** the "*now what*" of faith: which promotes acting in accord with one's knowledge, beliefs, and values. Many learn best by doing. What we know and believe is evidenced through what we do.

In catechesis with children and youth, parish religious education programs assist parents in their vocation of developing the character of a Christian and fostering lived faith in union with the Holy Trinity in their sons and daughters.

Catechesis: Whose Responsibility Is It?

Catechesis is a responsibility of the entire Christian community, (General Directory for Catechesis, #220) and in particular ways, the mission of:

Parents: *The catechesis given by parents with the family, “precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.”(Catechesi Tradendae #68, Pope John Paul II)*

“When children are baptized, the parents accept the responsibility to bring up their children in the practice of the faith and to see to it that the divine life God gives them is kept safe from the poison of sin to grow ever stronger in their hearts.’(Rite of Baptism of Children #56) At the same time, the Church promises to help parents foster their children’s faith and assists them specifically in their role as catechists for their children...” (NDC, Chapter 8, #54C)

The Bishop and Diocesan Staff: *Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the bishop is “chief catechist of the diocese.... a herald of the faith” (LG #25)*

“Within the variety of ministries and services performed by the particular Church in its efforts to evangelize, catechesis occupies a place of particular importance.”

“...Part of the bishop’s prophetic ministry...a collaborative effort within the diocese...” (NDC, Chapter 8, #54A)

Pastors and Priests: *“All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have the duty to provide it.”(Catechesi Tradendae #64, Pope John Paul II)*

The bishop’s “closest collaborators,” priests are “catechists of catechists.” (NDC, Chapter 8, #54B.1-2)

Deacons and Women and Men in Consecrated Life: *Deacons “participate in catechetical ministry as preachers and teachers.”*

Those in consecrated life catechize “by witness ...within the context of lives lived with extraordinary dedication to community life and an uncommon commitment to the Beatitudes.” (NDC, Chapter 8, #54B.3-4)

Parish Catechetical Leaders: *“The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader...They are catechists first.” (NDC, Chapter 8, #54B.5)*

Catechists: *“The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit...Christ invites all catechists to follow him as a teacher of the faith and as a witness to the truth of the faith. (NDC, Chapter 8, #54B.8)*



What are the Tasks of Catechesis? (according to the National Directory for Catechesis, Chapter 2, #20)

- + **Catechesis promotes *knowledge of the faith.***
 - Introducing hearers to Christ and inviting conversion to him
 - By action of Holy Spirit, engenders in hearer a desire to know Christ, his life and message
 - Content of God's self-revelation, found in *Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition* and introducing meaning of Creed

- + **Catechesis promotes *knowledge of the meaning of Liturgy and the Sacraments.***
 - Prepares members for full, conscious & active participation in liturgy and encounters with Christ in sacraments
 - Forming members for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for community spirit, for understanding correctly the meaning of creeds
 - Sacramental catechesis prepares for initial celebration of the sacraments, provides enrichment following their reception

- + **Catechesis promotes *moral formation in Jesus Christ.***
 - Transmits both content of Christ's moral teachings and their implications for Christian living
 - Journey of transformation and conversion, aiming to conform the believer to Christ
 - Encouraging witness to Christ's teaching in everyday life giving "living testimony" to the Gospel

- + **Catechesis teaches the Christian *how to pray with Christ.***
 - Conversion to Christ & union with him lead us to adopt his disposition of prayer & reflection
 - Developing attitudes of prayer and contemplation
 - Understanding the Our Father, the model of all prayer, and joining Christ in praying it
 - Prayer should be the ordinary environment for all catechesis

- + **Catechesis prepares the Christian *to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.***
 - Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34) is basis for disciples' life in community
 - Apprenticeship in Christian living based on Christ's teachings about community
 - Spirit of simplicity and humility
 - Concern for the poor
 - Particular care for the alienated
 - Fraternal correction
 - Common prayer
 - Mutual forgiveness
 - Fraternal love
 - Making daily conduct a shining testimony to the Gospel
 - Recognizing and celebrating each one's gifts
 - The Ecumenical Dimension: Openness to and appreciation of other Christian denominations and ecclesial communities
 - Need to know that other traditions share with us elements of our faith
 - Developing a true desire for unity
 - Affirming Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others

- + **Catechesis promotes *a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.***
 - Helping lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation
 - Equipping persons to be present as Christians in society in their professional, cultural & social lives
 - Nourishing evangelical attitudes of Jesus (found in Beatitudes)
 - Developing capabilities for meaningful, respectful interreligious
 - dialogue and communication with people of other religions



How do Parents and Parish partner in effective catechesis for children and youth?

“The sociological research that appears in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton (2005) reveals that the beliefs and values of teenagers reflect their parent's beliefs and values. The most effective way to shape the beliefs of children and young people is to shape the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of their parents.

While parents send their children to us [religious education programs] to educate, their responsibility doesn't end there. Instead, by sending us their children, they enter into a partnership with us. On our side, we promise to provide the best instructional and formation experiences. On the parent's side, they promise to raise their children in a Catholic home, where the faith is lived and God is loved. As part of this agreement, parents need to understand that what we teach will only be learned "by heart" if they help the children practice their faith at home, especially the practice of prayer and worship. Catechists ... complain that parents have developed a consumer understanding of what a parish or school should do. In reality, education and faith formation don't work that way. The parents' role is too essential. (Daniel S. Mulhall, Director of Catechist and Professional Development for RCL Benziger Publishing Co. In Benziger e-newsletter, "Partnering with Families," 9-7-10)

What does a Catholic home look like, sound like, feel like in the twenty-first century?

It looks like:

- ✦ A space graced by crucifixes, a Bible, and religious art in the various rooms of the home;
- ✦ A family gathered at mealtime around a table (not a TV), talking to one another, sharing stories, modeling what we do as Christian community gathering around the Eucharistic table each week.
- ✦ Catholic websites, explorations about the lives of the saints, mini-retreats and other inspirational sites included in the family's use of technology
- ✦ A place where people schedule time to celebrate Eucharist every week (Do you have it on your family calendars?)

It sounds like:

- ✦ Parents and children praying together throughout the day: in the car, before meals, at bedtime;
- ✦ Voices discussing the Scripture readings from the Sunday liturgy and Christian responses to events of each day: when the children report stories from the school day, discussing Christian responses to situations; when television shows & commercials promote messages in conflict with the message of Jesus, considering together what true happiness is, etc.

It feels like:

- ✦ A place where all are respected and loved as precious sons and daughters of God, encouraged in developing and using their talents to make the world more loving, peaceful, and just;
- ✦ A home where the mercy of God is evident in family members forgiving one another and calling each other to more faithful discipleship each day.

Practically speaking, what are some things parents can do to foster faith at home?

- ✦ **Go to Mass every Lord's Day and Holy day of Obligation.** Nothing, absolutely nothing can replace this weekly celebration. The celebration of Eucharist is the heart of Catholic living. All we do each day flows into and out from Mass. Don't miss the opportunity for yourselves or your children!
- ✦ **Pray individually.** Throughout the day, ask for God's help to live out your Christian vocation, thank Him for the many blessings in your life, praise Him for the wonders of each moment, express your sorrow for your sins and failings. God listens. And he speaks. Open your mind and heart to him.
- ✦ **Pray with family members.** Pray grace before meals. Remind your spouse & children that you are praying for them; ask them to pray for you. Join your children in prayers at bedtime. Make the Sign of the Cross on your children's foreheads when they leave for school, go to bed, etc. Ask your children to lead everyone in some of the prayers in their PREP folders. Let them choose the prayer and pray it aloud. (N.B. Those prayers are to be memorized at each level of PREP, but there is no way that catechists, given the short time they have with the children each week, can ensure that the children have them memorized. Ensuring that the children know their traditional Catholic prayers is a parent's responsibility.) Invite children to pray in their own words, too!
- ✦ **Use the PREP folders and books at home.** Review what the children have learned in a PREP session. Check your children's folders for communications from the PREP staff or your children's catechists. Consult the parish website for PREP updates. We will do our part in the religious formation of your children, but your part as parents is *more* important.
- ✦ **Celebrate the liturgical seasons and feasts of the Church:** Light an Advent wreath. Put up the Nativity scene piece by piece during Advent. Choose Christmas cards with religious messages. Discuss Lenten works of prayer, sacrifice, and deeds of charity as a family. Attend Stations of the Cross as a family during Lent. Consult the calendar the parish distributes each year for the feasts of saints. Acknowledge family members' Baptism dates.
- ✦ **Use technology to nurture your Catholic faith.** Explore Catholic websites for information about weekly Mass readings, the saints, and other ways to learn about and grow in faith. Start with the *parish website* and go from there. Some recommended websites are: www.usccb.org, www.pflaum.com, and www.loyolapress.com. For adults, thegodminute.org provides a daily 10-15 minute reflection that helps Christians stay grounded in Christ.

★ **Assumption BVM Parish Sacrament Preparation Processes for Children and Youth**

The seven Sacraments are celebrations of the power and presence of God active in the lives of individuals & in the Christian community. They proclaim, make explicit, and celebrate the grace of God in the lives of the persons receiving them. Sacraments are significant moments in the lifelong, ongoing process of growing in faith, hope and love with Jesus Christ.

Processes of preparation for Sacraments are essential to the ongoing spiritual formation in the lives of Catholic Christians. The goal of these processes is not only our young people's reception of a particular Sacrament; more important is the continuous development of the person as a Catholic Christian whose faith is maturing into the living, conscious, active belief of an adult disciple of Jesus Christ. The ideal situation for a child to enter the process of sacramental preparation is one in which he/she is consistently attending religious education/formation sessions (either in a Catholic school or a parish program) throughout his/her youth. Thus, Assumption Parish requires that a child entering a sacramental preparation process be a consistent participant in religious education sessions for at least one year prior to entering the preparation for a Sacrament. For new parishioners, participation in the religious education program at their previous parish may be acceptable as determined by Assumption's Pastor and Director of Religious Education.

Children in grade 2 may prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time.

Children in grade 3 may prepare to receive the Sacrament of Eucharist for the first time.

Youth in grade 7 may enter a two-year process to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

For parents/guardians whose children are involved in a sacramental preparation process, parent/guardian gatherings for each Sacrament provide theological updates, discussion, and community building. We encourage parents to attend these sessions that can enrich the whole family's celebration of the Sacrament.

Sacrament Preparation Processes: Dates TBD

FIRST RECONCILIATION

SMS Grade 2, PREP Good Shepherd

Gathering for Parents/Guardians: Sunday, 9 October 2022, 8:45- 9:45 a.m. in the Jubilee Center Coll Room
Childcare may be available.

Celebration of First Reconciliation: TBD

FIRST EUCHARIST

SMS Grade 3, PREP Apostles

Eucharistic Adoration for Parents and Children: Tuesday, 4 October, 6 – 6:45 p.m. in church followed by a
Gathering for Parents/Guardians: Tuesday, 4 October 2022, 7 p.m. in the Jubilee Center Coll Room
Childcare may be available.

Exploring Our Holy Home Church Tour: 28 February 2023, 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Liturgical Preparation Session for children celebrating First Communion: TBD

Celebration of First Eucharist: TBD

CONFIRMATION: REMOTE PREPARATION YEAR

SMS GRADE 7, PREP Discipleship 2

Year I Activities/Events (SMS Grade 7, PREP Discipleship 2, those to be confirmed in 2024)

Ordinary Time 2022: Year 1 Orientation Powerpoint to be distributed in October
Basic Catholic Knowledge Reviews, Spiritual Development Activities and Service Hours (*to be explained in Yr. 1 Orientation*)
Ordinary Time 2023: *Year 2 Orientation Gathering for candidates and parents: 13 February 2023

***Candidate and at least one parent/guardian should attend this meeting.**

CONFIRMATION: IMMEDIATE PREPARATION YEAR SMS GRADE 8, PREP Discipleship 3

Year II Activities/Events (SMS Grade 8, PREP Discipleship 3, those to be confirmed in 2023)

Gathering for parents/guardians and candidates: Sunday 11 September, 8:30 -9:45 in the Coll Room

Candidate Retreat: Sunday, 4 December 2022, 11:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Liturgical Preparation Session for Candidates and Sponsors: Monday, 13 March 2023, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

Celebration of Confirmation 2023: Tuesday 14 March 2023, 4:30 p.m.
Come, Holy Spirit!