

**Our Lady of Mercy  
and  
St. Brigid Parishes**



THE PARISH COMMUNITIES OF  
**OUR LADY OF MERCY**  
and  
**SAINT BRIGID**

44 Lake Street  
LeRoy, NY 14482  
[www.ourladyofmercyleroy.org](http://www.ourladyofmercyleroy.org)



*Parish Faith  
Formation Handbook  
2016-2017*

Faith Formation is the responsibility of all parents. It is, in turn, the mission of the Church to support you, the parents, in this responsibility. The faith formation of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid parishioners is more than religion classes, it is the life long effort of forming and, in turn, being formed as witnesses to Jesus Christ and opening hearts to the spiritual transformation given by the Holy Spirit. Throughout the program, you and your child will be provided with a variety of experiences to help your family realize what it means to be a Catholic Christian and a member of Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid parish communities.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has declared this year's theme to be "Prayer: The Faith Prayed."

## Welcome Letter

Dear Parents:

Welcome to Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid Parishes' Faith Formation Program. We look forward to another opportunity to minister to God's children and help them to know and feel His love. This handbook will help familiarize you with the various elements of our program.

Our curriculum for each grade of Faith Formation is determined by the Diocese of Buffalo. It is conveyed to our children by faith-filled volunteers, blessed with the gifts of teaching and love for children. Please support them in prayer and cooperation throughout the coming year.

Please take a few moments to review this handbook. It contains information regarding the mandatory curriculum from the Diocese to help raise safety awareness to our children. Please be sure to review the Discipline Policy and Attendance procedures.

Upon review of this handbook, please discuss the content with your child(ren) who are enrolled in the program. Please keep the handbook in a convenient location so that you can refer to it as needed.

***Enclosed with this handbook is an acknowledgement and a release for you to review. Please return this form with your registration forms.*** Our working together will ensure your child's safe and fruitful completion of another school year.

If the staff and catechists can be of any help to you or to your children during this exciting time of faith formation, please feel free to contact us at the parish office, or at the contact numbers provided in this handbook.

Sincerely,

Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M.,  
Pastor

## Prayer for Families

Dear God our Father,  
You have called all Christian families  
to be a sign of your love to the world.  
Help us to be generous  
with the gifts of life and love  
that you have showered on our family.  
May we share them so that  
our homes become true signs  
of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each  
day for all that sustains us  
and to look to Christ, who comes to us in the  
events of family life,  
in the sacraments of the Church,  
and in service to the poor.  
In all of this, our family becomes a living expres-  
sion of your Church,  
a hallowed home of life and love.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may all of us-spouses, parents, and children-share,  
as members of His Body, in Jesus' mission  
to build a civilization of love.  
Father, we ask this in Jesus' name  
in union with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

# List of Catechists

## 2016 - 2017

Catechist	Grade	Phone
Mrs. Kari Powers	K	768-2403
Miss Lauren Hardegen	K	(716) 544-4838
Mrs. Judy Ziccardi	1	768-2324
Mrs. Tracey Brownell	1	768-7352
Mrs. Cheryl Hersom	2	494-2553
Mrs. Ann Toni DuBois	3	538-4677
Mrs. Sharron Scott	3	768-6094
Mrs. Marie DiQuattro	4	330-6510
Mr. Joseph Vandebosch	5	494-2855
Mr. James Mech	5	494-2159
 Grades 6-8 (Edge) Core Team:		
Mrs. Pamela Gilbert		755-0731
Mrs. Kathleen Henning		768-7517
Miss Emily Reese		794-1310
Fr. Justin Freeman		483-0090
 Grades 9-11 (Life Teen) Core Team:		
Mrs. Chris Weinman		768-6112
Mr. Gary Privitera		768-7535
Mrs. Maureen Calmes		768-8926
 <b>Fr. Michael Donovan, O. de M.</b>		
<i>Pastor</i>		<b>230-9610</b>
 <b>Fr. James Chia, O. de M.</b>		
<i>Director of Faith Formation (Grades K-5)</i>		<b>709-2764</b>
<b>Denise Spadaccia,</b>		
<i>Director of Faith Formation (Life Teen, Edge)</i>		<b>356-4174</b>

## Table of Contents

Welcome	2
Mission Statement & Philosophy	4
Principle of Faith Formation	5
General Policies and Information	5—7
Parental Involvement	8
Faith Formation Overview	9—10
Faith Formation Curriculum	11—12
Safe Environment Program (Protecting God’s Children)	13
List of Catechists	14
Verification of Handbook Receipt & Photo Permission Slip	attachment

## Mission Statement

As a Eucharistic community, we grow in deeper communion with God and His Church when we recognize our call to holiness.

As God's stewards, with the help of His grace, we strive to fulfill our particular call to discipleship through prayer and work.

Being formed in Gospel identity, we are commanded to share the Good News of Jesus with others.



## Philosophy

Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid Parishes, in accordance with the decree of the Second Vatican Council, acknowledge that parents are the primary educators of their children.

Therefore, it is the role of our Faith Formation Program to support parents in their religious formation of the children by enhancing their teaching of Sacred Scripture, doctrine, morals, and attitudes and by providing opportunities for service activities and the experience of Catholic community.

Our Program is based on love of God, love of neighbor, and respect for individual uniqueness.

## “Protecting God’s Children” - Safe Environment Program

Our Catholic tradition has always affirmed the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. Every person with whom we come into contact deserves to be seen by us as through the eyes of God. We know that ministry with children and youth, in particular, is a sacred trust. We at Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid Parishes are committed to preserve, at all times and in all places, this sacred trust which is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ.

In 2002, the United States Catholic Bishops approved The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in an effort to protect children and youth from sexual abuse at all levels of church life. Article 12 of the charter directs all dioceses to create programs and processes to teach children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. The Diocese of Buffalo mandates we teach the Protecting God’s Children Safety Curriculum to students in Kindergarten through grade 11. This is a mandatory course integrated into the Faith Formation program each year to raise awareness of our parents and students.

We thank you for your support and interest as we partner to give our children the safest possible environment to grow in faith, in our parish, school and in our homes. Letters will be sent to the parents informing them of the day the curriculum will be presented in class. Parents always have the option to withhold their child from the class. Parents who opt-out are given the curriculum to teach their child. The material is mailed to all parents to ensure they have the curriculum to teach or review with their child. If you wish to have your child opt-out, please keep them at home on that date and con-

# Principle of Faith Formation

## Junior High

**Grade 6-8: Salvation History (Old Testament), Jesus and The New Testament, and Church.** Students are led to discover the richness of our Judeo-Christian roots and develop an appreciation for the Old Testament as God’s living word for us today, they are challenged to know Jesus and to follow His way of life through the Church, and to develop a deeper understanding of the Church through the experience of Christian morality.

## Senior High

**Grade 9-11: Creed and Christian Lifestyle (Praying, Social Justice), Sacraments, Prayer and Morality (Catholic Social Teaching), and Catechesis for Confirmation.** The major themes of the Old Testament—sin, forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation—are part of the story of every person. The students begin to incorporate the Catholic doctrine learned over their elementary years and more directly apply it to their life, with a focus on faith and formation, helping the student to become a more active and conscientious young Catholic adult. Through the journey of Confirmation preparation, the students have the opportunity to understand and reflect upon their relationship with Jesus and the Church. This involves understanding the Church’s teaching on sexuality, marriage, and the moral values of Christian living.



Empowering and equipping every family to live their faith at home and in the world is an essential part of the mission of the Church. The goal of faith formation is to foster faith that is living, conscious and active through the light of Catechesis. Our goal is to provide everyone with the resources and tools needed to grow in faith and to share it with others. Teachers will discuss with their classes how scripture and the teachings of our Faith are reflected in their daily lives at home, in school and in the decisions they make. Prayer and faith-sharing are an integral part of these gatherings. All children will be using a standard curriculum that is based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and approved by our Diocese. In addition to regular testing for all grades, the third and seventh grade students will take a diocesan assessment test in the spring.

## General Policies and Information

**Registration & Fees:** We ask that everyone registers each year. This year the fee is \$50 for one child; \$75 for two children and \$90 for three children or more. There is also a *Sacramental Fee* for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation of \$20. We welcome all children regardless of the ability to pay. Please contact the office as we have “Tuition Angels” who help with the fees for the program.

**Schedule of Classes:** Children in grades K through 4 meet on Saturday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Grades 5 through 11 meet on Sunday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Classes are held in the Our Lady of Mercy Parish complex.

**Mass Attendance:** The goal of catechesis is to bring people to the celebration of the Eucharist. Coming together as a parish family to worship our God is an important part of our on-going faith formation. The faith development of a child begins with, and is primarily the responsibility of, the parents. Therefore, it is expected that parents will attend Mass regularly with their children and be a true witness to them of living the faith.

**Class Attendance:** Families are encouraged not to miss more than three classes. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure the student's regular attendance at class. Just as in regular school, you need to report your child's absence. We ask that you call the office to report the absence and please make arrangements with the teacher to cover the week's lesson. If your student has difficulty attending on a regular basis, please discuss this with the Catechist and/or call the Director of Faith Formation. Make-up work will be required for all missed classes.

**Discipline:** An atmosphere conducive to learning is necessary so that each student may obtain full benefit from every classroom session. Respect and maturity is expected from all the students. We encourage a positive attitude toward learning so that the knowledge and grace of the Lord may develop within the heart and mind of our students.

To aid in the learning process, students will not be allowed to use cell phones during the class. As soon as the students enter the classroom, cell phones need to be turned off and placed on the teacher's desk. The phones will be returned as the students leave class.

**Dress Code:** It is important to maintain a spirit in the classroom that reflects the Gospel values that we are teaching. With this in mind, we ask all students to be very conscious of the clothing they wear to class. We will not tolerate shorts, tops, or any clothing that becomes a distraction. We ask parents to see that their child's clothing adheres to the dress code in the respective schools they attend.

**Weather Emergency:** If it is necessary to cancel classes due to hazardous weather conditions (snow or wicked weather) you will be contacted. *The general rule is: if LeRoy public schools are closed, classes will be canceled.*

**Picture Taking:** Sometimes pictures may be taken of students for use in publications or on bulletin boards. *Parents are to indicate and return the form included with this handbook if you have any objections to having a picture taken of your child(ren) published or posted.*

## Faith Formation Curriculum

***Kindergarten: God Asks Us to Care.*** –The world is a gift from God, God loves us, we are friends of Jesus and we live as friends of Jesus.

***Grade 1: Meeting God, Our Creator Through Jesus.*** The concept of God as a loving God and Creator, God the Father, Son and Spirit and lessons about Baptism are the focus of the 1st grade curriculum.

***Grade 2: Meeting Jesus in Reconciliation and Eucharist.*** The focus of the 2nd grade curriculum is the life of Jesus and His unique love for us. The child also learns of the Father's healing, forgiveness and love in the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

***Grade 3: Intensive Preparation for Eucharist & Church History.*** Concentration on the Mass and preparation for the celebration of First Eucharist are the major concentrations of the 3rd grade curriculum.

### **Intermediate Grades**

***Grade 4: Living Our Faith*** –Living a moral life, the Ten Commandments, the Two Greatest Commandments Jesus gave us, the Beatitudes and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are the focus of 4th grade.

***Grade 5: Celebrating Jesus' Presence in the Sacraments*** – The major theme is Sacrament, as Jesus' way of sharing God's life with us through life-giving signs and actions. Each of the seven Sacraments is studied in a comprehensive way.

**Confirmation:** Upon completion of **two years in the high school Faith Formation Program** (that is the 9th and 10th grades), students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade will begin Confirmation preparation. This includes attendance at a Confirmation retreat, faith sharing reflection, interviews and service projects, and work with their sponsor. Confirmation is usually celebrated in the Spring, and as with the other Sacraments, Mass attendance is an integral and important part of this preparation. Students attending Catholic high school will join in the classes to prepare for the celebration of Confirmation.

**Catechist (Teacher ) Responsibilities:**

The catechists in the Our Lady of Mercy and St. Brigid Parishes Faith Formation Program are volunteers. They have participated in diocesan preparation programs and/or in-service teacher meetings. They provide the needed services of teaching and supervision when your child(ren) attend Religious Formation classes. Please give them your support and reinforce their efforts by helping your child(ren) with any homework; in the memorization of prayers or basic doctrine; in participation at Mass; and in being an active participant in learning the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Catechist responsibilities include:

Plan and implement catechetical lessons following diocesan curriculum and parish Faith Formation program directives; follow diocesan/parish policies and guidelines; keep attendance records, active supervision of students, report suspected child abuse/neglect to DRE; respect copyright laws. Each Catechist has completed: Statement of Understanding/Consent (Diocesan Abuse Policy); background check; provided two references, VIRTUS Training “Protecting God’s Children”.

**Communication:** To assist with communicating on a regular basis, letters will be periodically mailed with information. It is the desire in the future to create an email list and to communicate via the internet, but this system is presently a work in progress. In the meantime please continue to check the weekly bulletin for important information, as well as the parish website, which is [www.ourladyofmercylero.org](http://www.ourladyofmercylero.org). Fr. James (grades K-5) can be reached by phone at 585-709-2764 and email at [religiously@ourladyofmercylero.org](mailto:religiously@ourladyofmercylero.org). Denise Spadaccia (grades 6-11) can be reached by phone at 585-356-4174 and email at [youthminister@ourladyofmercylero.org](mailto:youthminister@ourladyofmercylero.org).

**Catechist/Parent Communication:** Catechists have been encouraged to write letters introducing themselves and briefly going over the curriculum for the year. Please help us keep your children safe this year by communicating with the Catechist or the DRE of any events or changes that have occurred recently in your child(ren)’s life. A list of all catechists and their phone numbers has been conveniently provided for you on page 14 of this handbook.

**Youth Activities:** Throughout the year, there will be special activities for your child(ren) to participate in with the parish. This is an excellent means for your child(ren) to build a stronger connection with the parish family and is highly encouraged. For grades 9-11, these special activities/events are often classes and should be considered mandatory.

**Youth Group:** (6th through 12th grade) meet in the Youth Lounge in the Our Lady of Mercy School Annex Building. All Youth Group activities are posted on the website or be sure to check their Facebook page and/or the Church bulletin to find out about the upcoming events. Our Youth Minister can be reached via phone 585-356-4174 and email [youthminister@ourladyofmercylero.org](mailto:youthminister@ourladyofmercylero.org).

**Youth Mass:** Students in the 6th through 11th grade are asked to serve as ministers during the school year at the Sunday 5:30 pm Mass. Students help serve as Ushers, Lectors, Servers, Greeters, and Gift Bearers; **all** students are expected to help.

## Parental Involvement

Parents are the primary educators of their children and our program assists and supports their efforts to be evangelizers. Our Christian formation program relies upon and expects parental involvement. The following are ways in which parents can support their children:

1. By praying with and for your children, children learn best by your example. This can be done by daily praying together as a family.
2. By understanding it is parish policy that in order for a child to receive their sacraments, they must be enrolled and shown to have attended every year of Faith Formation.
3. By reviewing the materials covered each weekend with your child. This can be done by reading over the lessons with them to reinforce the truths learned.
4. By learning about the topic covered with your child, as you will be speaking of the importance of life-long learning about the faith. This is a powerful and necessary witness.
5. By incorporating this learning into a family time of faith sharing.
6. By witnessing your own desire for the Faith by attending and assisting the volunteer catechist in the classroom for at least one class each semester.

## Faith Formation Overview

*The following is a summary overview of the program that we offer for children in grades Kindergarten to 11th grade.*

**Kindergarten:** Stories of God’s love, simple prayers, experiencing what we do in “church.”

**Grades 1 through 5:** Weekly classes using the text series “*Blest Are We*”. These texts provide accurate and comprehensive content based on Scripture and The Catechism of the Catholic Church. They speak of Church customs, prayers and saints and continue to build from year to year.

**Grades 6 through 8 and 9 through 11:** Meets weekly and offers up-to-date Catholic teaching in the following areas: Creed, Social Justice, Liturgy and Sacraments, Prayer, Morality and Sacrament of Confirmation. We follow the *Life Teen* and *Edge* programs.

Supplemental resources are used to help teach stories from the Bible, our Catholic Traditions and Prayers. Speakers are invited or videos used at the discretion of the catechist and/or DRE.

Often students will bring home materials from class. Please look over the work carefully, talk to your child about the lesson, and encourage his or her effort. Remember that sharing your faith with your children is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. Please invite your children to discuss what they learned in their Faith Formation classes. Family time, which encourages reflection, faith sharing, and prayer is a rewarding experience and a source of spiritual enrichment for the entire family.

**Sacrament Preparation:** Sacraments are special graced moments in our spiritual life. Without good preparation, Sacraments do not have full meaning in this spiritual life. Please consider the importance of your involvement when registering your child.

**Sacrament of Reconciliation & First Eucharist:** Preparation for these sacraments takes place in grades 2 and 3. First Reconciliation is celebrated in the spring in 2nd Grade and First Eucharist is celebrated in May in 3rd Grade. These programs involve the parents more actively in the preparation for the sacraments—