**St. John the Baptist Parish Community**

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**CATECHIST HANDBOOK**

**St. John the Baptist Parish Religious Education Program**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

***GOD IS LOVE. GOD CREATED US OUT OF LOVE, TO LOVE.***

We are all created in the image and likeness of God, believing this, the mission of St. John’s Parish Religious Education Program is to Teach, Proclaim, and Witness to the children, teens and adults of our parish on the new life of Salvation that Jesus won for us on the Cross.

We teach about the need to build a personal relationship with the True Person of Jesus Christ, and strive to instill within their hearts and minds a deep love for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the healing power of forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We Proclaim the Good News and nurture a deep seeded thirst for Truth known by the study of our Catholic Faith revealed through Scripture and Tradition.

We Witness to the power of prayer, the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit given freely to us through the Sacrament of Confirmation, and the joy in service to those in need.

**Every Day...in Every Class...with Every Student...bring an Encounter with Christ.**

**Go make disciples!**

**Vision Statement**

We are committed to making our Catholic faith come alive in the minds, hearts and actions of all our PREP students.

Recognizing that we live in an ever-changing society, we will strive to help our PREP students and families:

* Respond to the challenge of the Gospel by being aware of our Christian responsibility to participate in acts of service, mercy, charity, justice and peace in our local and global communities;
* Know the foundations of the Catholic faith;
* Recognize the dignity of each person and appreciate the diversity among people;
* Make effective life choices guided by our virtues of faith.

**THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST**

**A catechist is faith, hope, and love attached to arms and legs, aches and pains, family duties and not enough time.**

**A catechist is an ordinary person who is extraordinary because he or she teaches as Jesus did.**

**A catechist is faithful to the past, open to the future, but especially dedicated to deepening the faith of the present generation.**

 *From the poem “A Catechist Is” by Msgr. John Francis Murphy*

All catechists share in the responsibility of carrying out the mission of St. John the Baptist Parish Religious Education Program. By their decision to serve as a Catechist, each agrees to support and to implement our mission. In doing so, they assume the role of lay ministers in the Church’s work of Catholic education and formation and join with the Director of Religious Education, Parish Priests, and parents in attempting to build a Catholic community. Specifically, a catechist shares in the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church and will be expected to advance the mission by word and example, fully practicing their faith. The invaluable contribution of catechists comes not only from their giftedness, but also from their witness and personal example as adults committed to the values inspired by faith.

**Catechist Covenant**

As a Community of Faith deeply invested in faith formation of our children, we pledge:

**“With the help of God, I am ready and willing to serve as a catechist along with all the catechists of this parish. To provide a positive environment where learning can take place. To accept each young person at their starting point. To provide opportunities for learning, worship, prayer, and service.”**

**Catechetical Sunday – Formal Commissioning and Blessing**

**Catechetical Sunday** is celebrated the third Sunday each September. Every parish in the United States celebrates the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Here at St. John’s we invite all the PREP families to attend and witness to the commissioning of our Catechists during the 10:30am Mass.

**Catechist formation is essential**

**We can’t give what we don’t have.** As catechists our own growth in faith and personal devotion is our strongest witness. We must be true to the words we teach. One of the areas for improvement and further development catechists have identified is the need for more *intentional catechist formation*.

Currently, the Diocese of Philadelphia offers an opportunity for Catechist Formation each year by sponsoring two Annual Catechist Convocation Retreat Days, packed with faith-building classes, inspirational talks, praise and worship.

More locally, the Bucks County community of DRE’s will be sponsoring another “Catechetical Night Out.” This night is in lieu of class sessions that week, it is an opportunity for county-wide catechists to gather, over light refreshments, where they share & exchange ideas. The highlight of the evening is a guest speaker who brings a fresh prospective on Catechizing in the world we live in today.

Within each parish opportunity abounds if you so choose to participate. Keep your eyes and ears open for these offerings and SIGN-UP.

Special Note: The Diocese of Philadelphia has begun the process of reformulating the current catechist formation offerings, replacing them with an expanded opportunities for additional intentional formation for our catechists.

**Catechist Behavior**

As catechists, it is imperative to provide a positive role model for the children we teach. Below is a brief listing of the limitations to some behaviors.

**Alcohol** – Since our PREP classes start right around dinner time, 6:15pm, some catechist may eat an early dinner on the night that they teach. It is strongly suggested that the use of alcohol before you arrive for class (wine with dinner) is not recommended. When attending parish events, please bear in mind that children are witnessing adults’ behavior; therefore any alcohol should be consumed responsibly.

**Drugs** – The use of illegal drugs, or the use of prescription drugs beyond their intended purpose, will not be tolerated.

**Tobacco** – The use of tobacco is not permitted on school grounds.

The DRE and the Pastor, reserves the right to respond in an appropriate fashion if any of the above mentioned guidelines are violated. The response may consist of one or more of the following:

* A written or verbal warning;
* A conference with the DRE and/or Pastor;
* A referral to an outside counseling center;
* Dismissal from ministry.

**Focus on Curriculum**

It is the goal of the Director of Religious Education to effectively select a curriculum or a mix of such, approved by the USCCB, to equip our catechists and aid them in their quest to develop Christian disciples. This is done by selecting a curriculum for students of all ages and abilities with an intentional focus on promoting:

* The child’s development of a personal relationship with Christ
* Knowledge of Sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition
* The liturgical life of the Church – worship and sacraments
* Knowledge of the moral teachings of the Church methods for discernment and skillful

decision making.

* Development of a healthy spirituality made tangible by helpful spiritual practices
* Experiences within our parish community to nurture love of God, self and neighbor, the spirit of simplicity and mutual forgiveness.
* Develop a missionary spirit in all children and families so that they will be the presence of Christ in society.

**A Balanced Approach to Learning to Child-Centered Catechesis** The curriculum “BE MY DISCIPLES” published by RCL Benzinger, empowers children to answer Jesus’ call to *“Be My Disciples.”* This curriculum was designed to:

 1. **Invite** children to discipleship through dynamic methodology incorporating the latest findings in brain research, social development, and emotional intelligence. Teaching strategies are intentionally chosen to maximize student cognitive abilities and skill levels.

2. **Teach,** each unit and chapter integrates the fundamental themes of Scripture and Tradition, Catholic Doctrine, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Disciple Power, Prayer, Catholic Social Teaching and Liturgical practice. The Catechist Manual makes these connections explicit. By learning the gifts and qualities of discipleship along with practicing habits and virtues, children learn the skills required to follow Jesus.

3. **Challenges** children to a deeper integration of faith and life by leading them to higher levels of thinking and encouraging a weekly faith choice. Each chapter includes an all inclusive, “With My Family” page to allow the child to bring home the lesson learned that week and *practice by doing* with their family.

**Tools for learning**

As the students move ahead in grade levels, content expands, educational theory improves, and social expectations of learning change students invariably.

**Learn → unlearn → re-learn.**

Therefore, there are no perfect learning tools. All tools or strategies for learning have strengths and weaknesses. The following are tools we use to engage learners in the catechetical process.

 1. Experience provides the overall framework for all catechesis. As soldiers in our Lord’s army, we are both witnesses and defenders of our faith. As such we seek community building and team building activities and deliberately build them into every class encounter.

2. Depending on the grade level, a single, or a combination of any of the following tools are used as a basis for weekly lessons:

Textbooks, Mass Books, the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the practice of Lectio Divina, and Visio Divina.

**Catechist Resources for all our textbook curriculums are available online.** Parents will be provided the links to grade specific curriculums so that they may access a lesson to assure their child stays on task when absent from class.

**Student -** **Parent Handouts:** Extend your student’s learning experience with seasonal activities and prayers that they can do at home. Based on the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year, encourage family activities that promote fun while learning about Jesus and his Church.

**A Guide to the Curriculum Resources we use**

**Grades 1 - 5: “BE MY DISCIPLES” (RCL Benzinger)** textbooks are used at these grade levels. Both online and in print a “Scope & Sequence” correlation is available to the Catechist. Enhanced lesson resources are also available online. Each catechist should sign-up on the RCL Benzinger website to have access to the many resources offered.

**Grade 2 - Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion:** In addition to the above, this grade incorporates the use of the **“BLESSED” Sacrament Series (Dynamic Catholic)**. This is a DVD/text curriculum which can be viewed at online by the parents. An online Link to this curriculum is be provided to the parents at the first Parent Sacrament meeting of the new school year.

**Grade 6: “CHRIST OUR LIFE”** **(Loyola Press)** and the **“CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE” (St. Mary’s Press)**. 6th grade is the first year of the two year required preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Christ Our Life textbook introduces the students to the key figures, scripture and traditions of the Old Testament.

**Grade 7 - Sacrament of Confirmation: “CONFIRMED IN THE SPIRIT” (Loyola Press)**, the **CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, the BIBLE, and “DECISION POINT” (Dynamic Catholic DVD & text Confirmation Program).** Lessons focus on the Person of Jesus, the Life of Jesus, Jesus’ ministry and the Sacraments. The combined use of these texts provide the student with a blend of teachings that are correlated and based on the required Diocese of Philadelphia Doctrinal framework for the reception of this Sacrament

**Teaching Children with Special Needs**

Each grade level Catechist manual includes practical teaching tips on how to include children with special needs who have been mainstreamed in their classes. However, this just scratches the surface of what we as catechists are able to provide to these children. First and foremost, the catechist must understand the nature of the students disability. This should be provided to the DRE by the child’s parent/guardian upon registration in the form of an IEP.

The DRE will then equip the catechist with the knowledge and resources required to teach this child. Each child must be treated as the individual they are, no two students are alike regardless of their diagnosis.

Some samples of teaching outside the box are:

**Multisensory Learning - *Exploring Faith Through Art – Visio Divina*** (holy seeing) enabling students to understand what they are seeing and reflect on it in light of the lesson. Prayer: Relevant opportunities help children integrate traditional prayer into daily life are built into the catechist manual.

**Interactive study** – Print out images that relate to the lesson you will be teaching and allow students to color as they listen. If you cannot locate such images, handout blank paper & crayons for students to draw images that relate to the lesson being taught.

**Session extenders for each lesson** – Loyola Press offers on their website Sunday Connections - useful background and activities to better understand the upcoming Sunday's Scripture readings, helping you to connect the Scripture to daily life in a meaningful way.

**Praying with Meditation – Lectio Divina** (Sacred Reading) - A Five-Step approach to understanding God’s word. (Catechist may request the guideline for this method of prayer from DRE)

**Prayer and Worship experiences are built into every class session.**

**Monthly PREP Mass is on the first Monday & Tuesday as noted on our PREP Calendar. Families are encouraged to attend.**

***“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you…”*** (James 4:8) Before there was doctrine, before there was a canon of Sacred Scripture, there was liturgy. The Church has long understood that how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we live "lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi." loosely translated, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi” means “As we pray, so we believe.” The second part “Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi” means “As we believe so we live.” It refers to the relationship between worship and belief. Good liturgy and good catechesis are bound together. They are partners. Both are important aspects of the Christian life and promote a deeper faith journey. Both liturgy and catechesis seek to form persons in faith. Both need each other. What we learn through catechesis we practice in worship. What we experience in worship we reflect on in catechesis.

Human learning is contextual; without the interplay of worship and catechesis religious faith unravels leaving the believer with large gaps in meaning and inhibits his/her ability to make sense of the ultimate questions of human life.

**Stress to your students and their families how important worship is to the faith process. Understanding the Mass makes worship more meaningful.**

**Service and Outreach are a part of our religious education program.**

***“Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead”* (James 2:17)**

If we are to be known as Christ’s disciples we must become servants to all. The plight of the poor must stir us to action on their behalf. Across the catechetical process our students and their families are encouraged to put their faith into action. We do this by: a. offering service opportunities as part of our catechetical classes, b. educating our students and their families about Social Catholic Teaching, c. encouraging our students and their families to participate in the various parish outreach efforts.

**As a catechist, if you or your students have an idea for a service project, please discuss with the DRE. We will do whatever we can to support you.**

**SHARED SPACES**

We share classroom space with the Regina Academy and other parish ministries. It is important that as catechists you are good stewards of not only our space, but of equipment and teaching tools others count on to fulfill their role in the school/parish mission. It is also important that we teach the children to be good stewards. **Suggestion:** You may reach out to the Academy teacher whose classroom you use. Emails provided upon request to the DRE. Communicate on a regular basis in order to develop some mutual guidelines for the assigned classroom. Many of the issues that can arise when sharing space can be eliminated or significantly reduced when there is clear, timely, respectful and honest communication between teachers and catechists.

**Catechists are responsible for the order and cleanliness of their classrooms. Please report any findings of mishappen conditions within your classroom at the start of each session.**

**Accidents happen.** If during your weekly class session an accident happens in which damage occurs, please report it to the DRE before leaving. A letter of apology should be written and sent to the Academy teacher.

**General guidelines for the care of classrooms**

* **No class should ever be left alone** without adult supervision – if you need assistance please send one of your children to the DRE in the front office who will get you assistance.
* **Food or drink is not permitted in classrooms**. This is a health safety issue as well as a cleanliness issue. Many children today suffer from food allergies. Even trace amounts of a substance can trigger a severe allergic reaction. This is not only a precaution for the PREP students but also for the Academy students whose desks are being used. If your group would like to have food on occasion, seek permission of the DRE who will help you in seeking out a suitable location for your gathering.
* **Respecting others property** - No student should ever go into desks, lockers, closets, drawers, cabinets. etc.
* **Graffiti or destruction of property** - Any student responsible for any unauthorized marking or drawing on school/parish property will be required to make restitution for the restoration of the damaged property.
* **No littering in the classrooms** – Trash is to be put in wastebaskets. If you do an art project please put all supplies away, wipe down the surfaces you have used, clean up scraps on the floor. And at the end of class remove the trash bag and place it into the large trash bins in the hallway. Replace the removed trash bag in the classroom.
* **Lights should be turned off, windows and doors closed** when you leave the room. Please erase white/blackboards and take lesson plan copies and any personal property out of the classroom.
* At the end of the evening, be sure to **return your class folder to the front office**. Classroom folders are not to be taken home.
* **If students bring cell phones, electronic games, etc., into the building,** they are to be turned off and are to be kept out of sight. The parish accepts no responsibility for any of these items brought into the building. If used inappropriately during PREP classes, please confiscate these items and turn them into the DRE at the front Office, along with the name of the student it belongs to. The DRE will make arrangements for their return to a parent.

**BATHROOM AND WATER FOUNTAIN USE**

Please remind your students to take care of their bathroom needs BEFORE class starts. However, should the need arise DURING class, students in grades 1 – 4 should be accompanied by an adult, if you do not have an assistant in your class, seek out the DRE or front office assistant who will escort the child; students in grades 5-7 should be allowed to go ONE at a time. Upon his/her return you may send another child. As a reminder, catechists / aides should NOT accompany children INTO the bathroom. Catechists need to be aware if a student from their class does not return in a reasonable amount of time. Keeping everyone safe is a priority; unsupervised children are not always mindful of their own or other’s safety.

**Attendance**

Student attendance records are considered legal documents and can be (and have been) subpoenaed by the Diocese. Therefore, the catechist is responsible for each of the students listed on their class roster during each session. It is essential for liability reasons, that the catechist takes accurate attendance at the beginning (within the first ten minutes) of each class session.

When attending PREP monthly Mass or an activity that requires taking the students out of the classroom AFTER attendance has been taken, you must take attendance again upon returning to the classroom.

The front office assistant will come around to collect classroom attendance forms. If for any reason, your class attendance record has not been collected, be sure to hand it in to the DRE at the end of the evening.

**Early Dismissal**: Parents must inform the DRE and Catechist prior to the class session if their child will be leaving early from class. Parents must pick-up their child directly from the classroom. Do not dismiss any student early from class unless a parent is there to pick him/her up.

**Catechist Absence:** Any Catechist who is unable to teach in a given week is required to notify the DRE as early as possible so that a substitute may be retained. The Catechist is also responsible to provide the DRE with the intended lesson plan for the missed class.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

**Severe Weather** – Our parish follows the Palisades School District guidelines for weather related cancellations and or early dismissals.

The DRE will send out an email notification to Parents and Catechists, will also post on our parish website the cancellation of any PREP session by 1pm on the day of the scheduled class.

**Fire** - If the fire alarm activates instruct students to evacuate the building using the designated routes posted for each room. Once out of the building, take attendance of your class to ensure everyone is safely out of the building. If a student is missing please notify a staff person or emergency responder immediately. Remain outside of the building and do not let students leave until the “All Clear” is given by a staff person. If it is the end of the evening, please do not allow children to leave, even with parents, until the emergency is over.

**Intruder in the Building –** A text will go out to all Catechists in their classrooms stating a “Squirrel is in the School” immediately lockdown your classroom using the lockdown bars affixed to both classroom doors. Children should be moved to low ground along the inside wall of each classroom behind the closet curtains. Stay away from the windows and the doors until further notice.

If an evacuation opportunity presents itself, you should quickly escort your class outdoors and run, don’t walk to the far end of the church parking lot – beyond the Rectory building.

**Behavior and Discipline - It’s all about respect!**

It is our desire to create and sustain a Catholic parish religious education program which is welcoming, safe, and promotes life-long learning in our faith. As the DRE and Catechists, it is our goal to reflect our Christian values in all that we do and to support and guide the children to do the same.

Effective classroom management begins with a clear and concise communication of expectations and procedures. You should clearly communicate the classroom rules and consequences for violations and they must be consistently enforced. Communication with parents regarding concerns you have or issues with student behavior should be communicated to both the DRE and parents immediately. Early interventions prevent incidents from continuing.

**Classroom emergencies** – If you need immediate assistance in your classroom, send one of your students or your co-catechist to the DRE or front office assistant, who will get you help. Do not leave the children in your care unsupervised.

**Incident Reports** – If an incident occurs in your classroom (a child gets ill, is injured or injures another student, or disrupts your class in any significant way, etc.) you must report such in writing to the DRE. This must be submitted via email either that evening of at the latest, the next morning.

**Student Behavior** – Students will be held accountable and responsible at all times for their actions and suitable measures will be taken to ensure this. In support of the catechetical staff, we expect the full cooperation of the parents in reinforcing PREP classroom and parish behavior guidelines. Failure by parents/guardians to cooperate as determined by the DRE may result in the exclusion of the child from PREP classes and other activities.

**Establishing a Student Behavior Covenant:** Covenant is a central idea that that runs throughout sacred scripture. It is a significant idea that grounds the Catholic understanding of sacrament. There are multiple examples of covenants in both the Old and the New Testament scriptures, each developed and nuanced in surprisingly rich ways. We want all the PREP students to understand what a covenant is and why it is important.

**A covenant is a sacred oath or promise; not a list of simple do’s and don’ts. Covenant is the way God has chosen to be in relationship with us and invited us to be in relationship to Him. Sacred scripture is a covenant document (testament is the Latin for covenant). Our sacramental symbols and rituals are the way we as Catholics express our fidelity to our covenant with God and with each other.**

**Effective Classroom Management**

The key to establishing a relationship of trust and respect with your students depends on you and your co-catechist. The goal of all classroom management techniques is to create an atmosphere in which the self-esteem and dignity of everyone involved is established and nurtured, everyone is safe – physically and emotionally, learning can take place, relationships within and among the members of the class are established and nurtured.

**Disciplining with dignity**

At all times guide a child behavior with words and actions that convey respect and care for the child.

 1. In the first few weeks of class, a “class covenant” should be written and distributed to each student. It is also suggested you give one to each parent and explain what it is and it’s intent.

2. Affirm and use praise words and actions that contribute to group function.

3. Give frequent reminders to students about what constitutes appropriate behavior.

4. Three (3) warnings will be given to any student who engages in inappropriate behavior. The first two should be verbal, the third in writing to the parent. After the third classroom warning the student will be sent to discuss their behavior with the DRE.

5. The DRE will contact with parent if a student is continuously disruptive. If further action is necessary, both the parents and student will meet with the DRE and/or the Pastor to try and discover why the child cannot respect the Code of Behavior.

6. Suspension from the Program is the last resort.

Most behavior problems can be solved between the catechist and the parents if there is a spirit of cooperation present that the child can sense. The goal is the same - to create an atmosphere in which learning can take place.

**Inappropriate classroom management techniques:** Any and all forms of corporal punishment – Catechists will NEVER employ corporal punishment, or inflict physical abuse with respect to anyone with whom they might work, or the youth with whom they might come in contact.

Any behavior that would/will endanger the health or safety of a child (this includes leaving children unsupervised)

* belittling or humiliating a child
* blaming or shaming a child
* using sarcastic or cruel humor
* negative labeling
* harassment

**In our work with children, we want to focus on the development of responsible behavior.** The essence of Catholic Christian life is the formation of a personal value system, which acts as the motivating force of good self discipline. Guiding students to construct these values is the major role of the parents and educators in our society. Children must learn, therefore, to accept the results of their behavior. When our actions cause disturbance or injury to others, or the reputation of our parish, there are consequences.

**Expectations for Student Conduct**

The following expectations will be in addition to the behaviors catechists outline in their classroom behavior covenant. The DRE will review these expectations with parents at the beginning of the year during our PREP opening parent meeting.

1. Students are not to engage in any behavior that would/will endanger the health or safety of themselves or any other person or persons. 2. Unless permission has been given, no student is allowed to leave the school at any time during classes. 3. If cell phones, or electronic games, etc., are brought into the building, they are to be turned off and are to be kept out of sight. The parish accepts no responsibility for any of these items brought into the building. If used during class without the catechist’s permission, these items will be confiscated. Arrangements may be made for their return to a parent. 4. Inappropriate language or gestures will not be tolerated during the class or during any PREP Mass/activity. 5. Fighting – Altercations which result in physical contact – is strictly forbidden. 6. Stealing - Each student has a responsibility to properly safeguard his/her own personal property. The student also has a greater responsibility to safeguard the possessions of other persons. Stealing is a direct infringement upon the rights of others. 7. Graffiti or destruction of property - Any student responsible for any unauthorized marking or drawing on parish property will be required to make restitution for the restoration of the damaged property. 8. Weapons - Students are forbidden to possess, handle or transport any instrument, on or around the parish premises that is generally considered a weapon. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following items: lighters, knives, guns, stun guns, pipes, chains, stars, fireworks, hazardous chemicals. This is a very serious issue and can be deadly. 9. Threats of Violence / Bullying - In response to the growing number of violent incidents in schools and churches across our country, as well as a desire to reemphasize Gospel values, violent threats of action will not be tolerated. 10. Cyber-Bullying – If any student is found to have posted an inappropriate comments or photos of another student, they will be immediately suspended from attending PREP class until after a DRE-Parent meeting has been conducted and a suitable resolution attained. Threats of violence should be reported to the principal, teacher, and parents. 11. Harassment – written, verbal, or physical, including cyber bullying is strictly prohibited. 12. Sexual Harassment is illegal under both state and federal law and is objectionable under any circumstance. Sexual harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical. Sexual harassment can take many forms: insulting sounds, noises, or words; offensive pictures, notes or objects; derogatory sexually-based humor or obscene gestures; unwelcome touching, pinching, deliberate bumping into another; suggestive remarks about a person's body, appearance, gender, or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment of a student, is unacceptable conduct. Volunteers or students who engage in any type of sexual harassment will be subject to appropriate discipline, including dismissal.

a. Retaliation in any form against a catechist or student who exercises his or her right to make a complaint under this policy is strictly prohibited and will itself be cause for appropriate disciplinary action.

b. Any volunteer or student who knowingly makes false charges against a volunteer catechist or a student in an attempt to demean, harass, abuse, or embarrass that individual shall be subject to the sanctions for misconduct set forth by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

**Options for Disciplinary Action in regards to serious infractions**: The following potential actions are listed from minimum to maximum. This does not mean that the first time a student "gets into some trouble" that step one would be taken, the second time that step two would be taken, etc. This is only a list in the order of severity of possible consequences. Severe disciplinary cases will be handled individually on a case-by-case basis and the Director of the Religious Education Program in consultation with the Pastor has the authority to determine the consequence based on the situation.

* Catechist/Parent/Student has a conference.
* DRE/Catechist/Parent/Student has a conference.
* Written apology required.
* Community Service is required (one hour).
* Restitution is required (damaged property).
* Suspension or Expulsion from PREP.
* Police notification will be mandatory for severe infractions involving weapons, destruction of property, and/or drugs and violent threats of action. Should the need for search and seizure occur, St. John the Baptist PREP would follow the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

**PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN**

**Sexual Abuse:** In accordance with the law of the State of Pennsylvania, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and with the values found in our Catholic tradition, any form of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or any other similar action is explicitly prohibited. Persons acting on behalf of St. John the Baptist Parish, its programs and activities are reminded of this prohibition. Contact of this nature is absolutely forbidden and is cause for immediate dismissal and referral to the local / state authorities, if appropriate.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** St. John the Baptist Parish and/or the staff will not assume any responsibility or liability for any person who inflicts bodily or personal injury consisting, or arising out of, corporal punishment, sexual or physical abuse, sexual exploitation, or any other similar act, harm, injury, or damage to any person in the care of its employees, or others acting in its behalf, whether or not committed by or with the knowledge or consent of any injured person.

**Mandatory reporting of child abuse and/or neglect** – The Archdiocese provides an online training module for catechists on reporting child abuse and/or neglect. There is no charge for this training.

Under Pennsylvania law, any person, paid or volunteer, who works, volunteers and/or comes in direct contact with children in a program, activity or service *is a mandated reporter* and must immediately report suspicions of child abuse or neglect. *Within the Archdiocese this includes all members of clergy, parish and school staff, and volunteers who are likely to come in direct contact with children.*

**Relative to the Policy Statement on child abuse and/or neglect:** As a condition of service, volunteers agree to adhere to the terms and conditions of the above noted policy regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse and/or neglect and all the other stated implications of the policy for employees. Whenever one suspects abuse or neglect of a minor, he/she shall immediately report any evidence to the DRE, who will then take the appropriate steps, which may include a report to Department of Children and Family Services, and local/state authorities. The report shall include any pertinent information, such as: the name and address of the child and his/her parents (or others having custody), the person’s age, the nature of the person’s condition, any evidence of previous injuries or disabilities, any other information which might be helpful in establishing the cause of such abuse or neglect, and the identity of the person believed to have caused such abuse or neglect.

In all cases the staff members / volunteers must immediately report their suspicion to **ChildLine**. This can be done by phone to Pennsylvania’s **24-hour hotline at 800-932-0313 or electronically** in cases where the child does not appear to be in immediate danger of abuse or harm.

**Authorization and Background Check**

**The Archdiocese of Philadelphia requires all adults who work or volunteer with minors, in any capacity in parishes, schools and institutions operating within its jurisdiction, to complete the requirements of the “Protecting God’s Children” program as follows:**

**Child Clearances –** The Archdiocese of Philadelphia Office for Child and Youth Protection clearly outline the required clearances of all persons who work directly with or may come in contact with children in their staff or volunteer position. Including:

* Federal background check (required for volunteers if PA resident for less than 10 consecutive years)
* PA State Criminal background checks
* PA child Abuse Clearance
* Disclosure Form (signed & witnessed)

**Diocese OCYP Required Training:**

* Certificate of Completion for Safe Environment Part 1, one-time attendance to a three hour VIRTUS workshop ([www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org))
* Certificate of Completion for Safe Environment, Part 2, online “Mandated Reporter” session provided by VIRTUS
* Signed acknowledgment page of Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries form

**Any volunteer over the age of 16 must obtain and file ALL their clearances with the Parish Office BEFORE serving in their ministry. Clearances must renewed every 5 years.**

**For more information contact the Parish Office or visit the Office of Child and Youth Protection via the Archdiocese website,** [**www.archphila.org**](http://www.archphila.org)

June 2019