Catechetical Program
Parent Handbook

St. John Vianney Parish
Colonia, NJ
Dear Parents/Guardians,

On behalf of our catechists, aides and office staff of the Catechetical Program of St. John Vianney Parish, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share the faith of our Church with your children. We are humbled by the trust you have placed in us and pray that we will be effective instruments in spreading the Gospel.

After you have read this Handbook, please sign and date the Acknowledgement, and return it with your child. For those of you with more than one child, please return the acknowledgement with your oldest child.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mary Cowan
Parish Catechetical Leader

Mission Statements –
Parish

In the spirit of St. John Vianney’s zeal and concern for people, we are a community proclaiming the Gospel in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. The community of St. John Vianney strives to utilize the gifts and talents of each parishioner to create a vibrant welcoming parish. Through our liturgies, ministries, and organizations, we encounter Christ and are empowered to bring Him to the world.

Catechetical Program

Having been anointed as priest, prophet and king when we were baptized, and united in our belief in a God who is love, we respond to his command to love one another. Always and everywhere, we endeavor to transmit by teaching and by the witness of our lives, the teaching and life of Jesus Christ.

Welcome!

Welcome to the Roman Catholic Catechetical Program offered by St. John Vianney Parish. Our catechists are faithful to and teach the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Our text books rely extensively on teachings as set forth in The Catechism of the Catholic Church. We use Diocesan programs for the training of our catechists.

The St. John Vianney Catechetical Program is an eight-year program, beginning in grade one and continuing through grade eight. We encourage each child to begin catechetical instruction in first grade, and continue each successive year through eighth grade. We will work with parents and children to facilitate transfers into and from the St. John Vianney program to ensure continuity in the catechetical instruction of each child.

Parental Involvement

You, the parents, are the primary educators of your children. Our Catechetical Program is intended to supplement and complement the formation you provide. The lessons you teach your children by the example of your lives have a profound effect on your children.
“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source form which all its power flows.” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10) Each week we gather for Mass. We offer thanks and praise. We hear God’s word and are nourished by Christ’s body and blood in Eucharist. **We cannot emphasize enough how essential it is for us to come together for Mass each week.** Our catechists will never cease to talk to your children about regularly coming to and participating in Mass. Just as we expect your children to regularly attend weekly classes, we expect them to regularly participate in weekly Mass. We hope and expect you accompany your children when they come to weekly Mass.

Let your children see you taking time to pray. Pray with your children. Volunteer to help in the community or the parish. Help an elderly or sick relative or neighbor.

Remember, the example of your life is their primary teacher. If your children see you living as an active Catholic your role model will go a long way toward assisting the children connect what they are learning in class to life.

“We are most grateful for the dedication of those catechetical ministers who share their time and talent. Please consider sharing your faith with the children and families of our parish by volunteering as a catechist or aide. We provide training and a faith filled community to support and nourish you.”

**Curriculum**

**Grade 1**
Sadlier We Believe: God Loves Us (with Project Disciple)
- God, Father and Creator of the World;
- Jesus Son of God and our friend;
- Holy Spirit, giver of strength and joy
- Pflaum: ‘Promise’

**Grade 2**
Sadlier We Believe: Jesus Shares God’s Life (with Project Disciple)
- The sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist;
- Jesus, model for Christian living
- Pflaum: ‘Good News’

**Grade 3**
Sadlier We Believe: We Are the Church (with Project Disciple)
- The traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church
- The Apostles Creed and the Seven Sacraments
- Pflaum: ‘Good News’

**Grade 4**
Sadlier We Believe: God’s Law Guides Us (with Project Disciple)
- The Beatitudes
- The Ten Commandments
- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Pflaum: ‘Venture’

**Grade 5**
Sadlier We Believe: We Meet Jesus in the Sacraments (with Project Disciple)
- The sacramental life of the Church
- Seven Sacraments in depth
- Pflaum: ‘Venture’

**Grade 6**
Sadlier We believe: We Are God’s People (with Project Disciple)
- God’s plan of salvation as recorded in the Bible
- Old Testament and New Testament
Curriculum (continued)

Grade 7
RCL Benziger: Be My Disciples- Life in Christ Jesus
➢ A synthesis of Catholic beliefs: Trinity, Christian Community and Sacraments.
➢ New Testament - Who is this Jesus?
➢ Pflaum: ‘Visions’

Grade 8
One Faith, One Lord (book) – Decision Point Videos
➢ Created and Saved
➢ Welcomed into the Church
➢ Eucharist and Reconciliation
➢ Our Catholic Life

Every grade (age appropriate)
➢ Family Life Program addressing: family living, personal growth, self-understanding, respect for life, Catholic Christian sexuality, social living
➢ Liturgical year
➢ Lives of Saints
➢ Sacramentals

Publishers of Texts:
Grades 1-6: Sadlier
1-5, 7 Pflaum
Grade 7: RCL Benziger
Grade 8 Decision Point Dynamic Catholic (Matthew Kelly)
All Grades: Family Life RCL/Benziger

The foundation laid in each grade level is necessary for a child to advance to the next level, much as is the case an academic program. A parent should not withdraw a child from the Catechetical Program after the child has received First Communion, assuming the child can later just “pick up” with Confirmation preparation. Living the Catholic Faith requires far more than a child can be given or can grasp in first and second grade!

Additional Programs
The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), as adapted for children, and special needs classes are available, as needed.

RCIA is an acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is a faith journey. It is a journey for persons who have perhaps never been baptized, or who maybe were baptized as Catholic or in another Christian tradition, but for whatever reason were not confirmed and have not received First Communion. At the completion of the journey, they receive the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, for those not previously baptized, and Confirmation and First Communion. If you or someone you know is interested in the RCIA, for an adult or a child, please let us know.

Our Special Needs Program is offered to address one of the basic tasks of catechesis - to initiate into the life of the Church community. How important it is that we do not isolate or somehow exclude a child who may have special needs. When we speak of special needs we are speaking of a child who may have a learning or developmental disability or a physical disability. If your child may benefit from this program, please let us know.
Sacramental Preparation
We will provide specific information pertaining to preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation to the parents of children preparing for these Sacraments. Parents are given information with the dates and times for parent meetings during which the policies for the Sacraments will be discussed and information distributed.

Homework
Assignments are given as a means to reinforce classroom lessons. Just as you take time to review your child’s assignments in his or her academic program, we encourage you to be involved with the assignments given in catechetical classes.

Protecting the Children
A Police Officer is on the premises during the times classes are in session. In addition, there is a receptionist at the desk who will stop everyone seeking to enter the building while children are in the building. If you need to come to the Office to pick up a child before the usual time for dismissal you will be required to stop first at the reception desk to sign in. Similarly if you are dropping off a child after classes have begun, you will be asked to stop at the reception desk before proceeding to the Catechetical Office. We will escort children to and from the classroom, as appropriate. After first stopping at the reception desk you may then proceed to the Catechetical Office which is the first office on the left. Parents may not proceed into the hallways to go to a classroom unless we have given express permission. Any adult, parent or otherwise, who violates this rule will be trespassing and will be escorted from the premises by the Police Officer.

We also need to be aware of the safety of our children before and after classes. The parking lot can be a particularly dangerous place with many cars jockeying for position to drop off or pick up. Stop and wait. The safety of our children is key.

Dealing with Allergies
There are a number of students in the St. John Vianney Catechetical Program who have severe and potentially life-threatening allergies to peanuts, tree nuts and other foods. Because of these life-threatening food/drink allergies, we cannot allow edible treats of any kind. Snacks, candy, gum, food and drinks of any kind are not permitted during classes on Monday or Thursday evenings. This includes holiday or end of the year parties. We want to enforce a safe environment for all children in our parish. Our catechists are aware of potential health threats and will not permit snacks and drinks to be eaten or shared in our classrooms.

Exception: If your child has a medical condition that would require him or her to have a snack, please send a note to the Office. Provide the child’s name and grade, specify the condition and indicate the nature of the food or drink he or she needs to bring.

Attendance
When your child will be absent, please call our office before the scheduled class time (732-388-1424). If you get our voice mail, please leave a message with the name of the child, grade level and briefly state the reason for the absence. If you have not called prior to class, we will not call you and this will be considered an unexcused absence. Please send a note with your child the following class session to address the reason for the absence. As mandated by the diocese, Illness, injury, and emergency situations such as a death in the family, are considered excused absences. Sports or extracurricular activities do not fall into the category of excused absences. In the event of serious illness or injury that prevents a child from attending classes for a period of time, we will work with you and the child, if the child is able, to help the child keep up with grade level work. We have scheduled classes from September through May.

Please refer to the calendar for the dates classes will not be in session. In order for us to consider a child as having completed a certain level, among other things, we consider whether the child had attended a significant number of classes.
Attendance (continued)

Please make every effort to bring your child to class on time.

Monday Classes
Grades 1 – 5: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm
Grades 6 & 7: 7:30 – 8:45

Thursday Class
Grades 8: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm- every other week

Special Needs Classes: Please call the office to make arrangements.

Emergency Closing Information

The following rules will apply in the event of inclement weather:
➢ If the local public schools are closed due to weather, the catechetical classes scheduled for that evening will be closed.
➢ If the local public schools have an early dismissal due to weather, the catechetical classes scheduled for that evening will be closed.

A recorded message will be provided on the Catechetical Office phone line (732-388-1424)

Early Dismissal

If your child must leave class prior to the scheduled conclusion you must send a note advising us of the time the child will be picked up and the name of the parent or guardian who will pick the child up. **No child will be dismissed until first signed out in the Catechetical Office.**

Program Fee

A Program Fee is payable for each child. If payment of this fee would be a hardship, please contact the Parish Catechetical Leader. A late fee is charged for registrations after the close of the registration period.

Records

It is essential that our records be up-to-date. In the event of any change in information such as phone or mailing address please contact the Catechetical Office as soon as possible. If you have an email address, please share it with us. It is imperative that we have correct emergency contact information.

Discipline

For our program to be effective, it is necessary for the students to behave properly at all times. In the instance of repeated behavior problems, you will be called for a conference with the Parish Catechetical Leader. The child may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the Program. We will not tolerate any form of violence, and students found to be perpetrators will be suspended or expelled, as necessary. Any student found vandalizing Church or school property will be held accountable.

Parental Concern Form

To initially advise you of a concern concerning homework, attendance or discipline we will send a “Parental Concern Form” to your home. Please sign the form to acknowledge receipt and return it to the Catechetical Office. As appropriate, we will invite you to come for a meeting with the catechist and Parish Catechetical Leader.
Progress Reports
Unlike a report card as is used in an academic program, Progress Reports do not seek to grade a child. Rather, the goal is to assess how well each child is progressing, to the extent that the progress is observable. Progress Reports will be distributed in January and must be signed and returned to the Catechetical Office. Progress Reports are maintained in each child’s permanent record file.

Dress Code
Students may wear clothing similar to that worn to school provided it is modest and reflects Christian values. Any student arriving wearing clothing determined to be improper will be kept out of class until such time as a parent arrives to provide appropriate clothing.

Fire Drills
We will conduct at least two fire drills during the year.

Child Abuse Policy
New Jersey Law requires us to immediately notify the Division of Youth and Family Services if a catechist or the Parish Catechetical Leader suspects a child has been abused.

Impaired Driver
We will not send a child home with a driver who is visibly impaired. We will contact the emergency number to secure an alternate driver.

Drugs
Drugs are never permitted on the premises. Any student found possessing drugs will be detained until the police have been notified.

Crisis Management
The Catechetical Program follows the Crisis Management Plan established by St. John Vianney School. This plan addresses preparedness for traditional crises and emergencies such as fires, accidents as well as biological, radiological, chemical concerns and other terrorist activities. The plan includes procedures for explosions, bomb threats, violence, intruders, weapons and hostages.

Contact:
Mary Cowan, Parish Catechetical Leader
Email: mcowan@sjvs.net
Office Phone: 732-388-1424
Catechetical Office Hours:
The following Office Hours apply during the weeks when classes are in session.

Monday: 11:00am – 4:00 pm; 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Tuesday: 9:00 am – 12:00 noon; 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Wednesday: 9:00 am – 12:00 noon; 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Thursday: 11:00am – 4:00 pm; 5:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Friday: 9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Other times, by appointment.

The following Office Hours apply during the balance of the year unless otherwise noted on our outgoing voice mail message. Particularly during the summer months, call the office first to make sure it is open.

Monday – Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Other times, by appointment.

More Information
Visit our website for information about the Catechetical Program.
http://www.sjvianney.com/catechesis/
Acknowledgement

Instructions: One Acknowledgement must be completed for each family. Please list all children in your family attending our Program below

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I acknowledge receipt of the Catechetical Program Parent Handbook. I have read the Handbook and agree to abide by the policies set forth in the Handbook and understand that attending Mass on a weekly basis is an integral part of the program.

Signature of Parent/Guardian ___________________________

Printed Name______________________________

Date ______________________

Acknowledgement page must be signed and returned with registration form.