



# **Our Lady of the Valley Parish Catechist Handbook 2025-2026**

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**May God bless \_\_\_\_\_,**

*(your name)*

**an angelic teacher of His love!**

*Handbook written and designed by Katie Sadakierski, OLV Director of Religious Education*

## Table of Contents

Welcome .....	3
Introduction & Program Overview .....	4
Engaging with our Religious Education Program as a Catechist: Channels of Communication .....	11
2025-26 Catechist Volunteer Form .....	13
Catechist Formation Standards.....	15
Mary, Mother of Catechists and Queen of All Saints: Our Model of Faith .....	20
Guide to Praying the Chaplet for the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary .....	25
Our Lady of the Angels and the Guardian Angel Chaplet.....	27
Imitating the Choirs of the Holy Angels in our Ministries as Catechists .....	30
Religious Education Year 2025-26 Program Goals.....	36
The Meaning of Catechesis and Evangelization.....	53
2025-26 Religious Education Program Schedule .....	55
2025-26 Thematic Calendar.....	57
Safe Environment Training.....	61
Additional Resources: Links .....	62
Opportunities for Catechetical Certification & Professional Development .....	65
Prayers for Catechists .....	66
Reflections for Catechists: Pre- and Post-Year Self-Evaluations .....	76
Notepaper for Reflective Journaling.....	78





Welcome!

Thank you so much for volunteering in our religious education program.

Religious education is vital to the preservation of our Catholic Faith. As we pass on the rich traditions of our Church to future generations, we keep the light of Christ's love ignited in hearts, a light by which we see clearly as we navigate our paths in life.

Sharing Christ with others is a beautiful gift we treasure. We are truly blessed to serve Him together as a parish family, and we honor the God-given gifts in witnessing to Christ that you bring to catechesis.

In the following pages, you will find a guide to our religious education program, and further information about how to assist.

We look forward to collaborating with you in fostering opportunities for spiritual growth among our program students and families. Together, let us pray to glorify God in our ministry to nourish souls and grow the Faith.

Thank you again for enriching the vibrant life of the church, for building our community, and inspiring brothers and sisters in Christ through your service.

Pax tecum (Peace be with you),

Katie Sadakierski, Director of Religious Education

## **Introduction & 2025-26 Religious Education Program Overview**

In our 2022-23 religious education year (REY), we implemented an original family catechesis model, balancing home study with in-person learning to strengthen the domestic church. We will continue to uphold our mission of drawing families closer to Jesus and Mary, working towards fulfilling our goal of deepening inward spiritual engagement so as to radiate Christ's light outward, into the world, allowing for a wider reach.

Retaining our curriculum and continuing in the use of our original learning materials (monthly packets with lessons and activities relating to the month's overarching theme), we will further innovate our approach to in-person learning. After using a discussion-based, Socratic style of student and family engagement for our monthly in-person meetings in the 2022-23 REY, we now utilize learning centers for our class sessions, a format implemented during our 2023-24 REY. Structured according to cohorts, we organize learning materials according to groups within a certain age range/grade level: PK-2 (early childhood), grades 3-6 (intermediate/middle-grade), and 7-9/10-12 (middle/high school).

This year, we will continue to create opportunities for cohorts to come together in engaging with our themes during our class sessions, where three learning centers will be offered, one for each mixed-age cohort. Centers will allow for a combination of art, reflection, and discussion, appealing to a variety of learning styles with catechist-led activity facilitation that students will respond to in their activities, making meaning from their learning experiences.

Class meetings begin with prayer, an outline of the class session, and a brief overview of the monthly devotional theme, as well as thematic activities to be completed at home during the weeks of the month leading up to the next class session. Following the introductory group-wide presentation, students will join their respective cohort, visiting their group's designated learning center, where an activity (expanding upon packet activities) will be completed. Parents and guardians are welcome to engage with their children at the centers as well.

After the centers, all grades will return as a whole group to hear announcements about upcoming events in the church, along with information about program sacrament preparation, and additional catechetical/family faith formation opportunities throughout the diocese. Meetings will culminate in a closing prayer. All print materials will be provided to families at class meetings, where they may also submit any completed handouts/activities. Some families submit activities online through our Google Form submission forms to verify completion

of home activities, which are assessed by the DRE. Catechists review the activities completed by students in their print activity books.

Sacrament rehearsals and retreats will be held separately from class meetings. These are further opportunities to assist in preparing candidates for the sacraments they will be making at the close of the religious education year. Catechists may also assist with the Confirmation and First Holy Communion Masses and receptions themselves, aid in providing additional instructional support to students/families (through tutoring sessions by appointment), or participate in panels, such as at retreats for sacrament students, who will listen to speakers reflect on their faith journeys as they consider how they will use their unique talents to bring Christ's light into the world.

Volunteers may opt to assist with special events supplementing religious education classes, such as Bible story-times for early childhood students, or sacrament preparation mini-meetings for students and parents. Separate meetings for catechists will be scheduled as needed when preparing for upcoming classes and events. We welcome feedback, including through our annual catechist survey, which will collect responses from catechists that we use in program planning.

For the 2024-25 religious education year, we continued offering dynamic programming, with added emphasis on special faith formation events for children and families of all ages. Active, hands-on experiential learning, complemented by times for contemplation and reflection, ensured that high-quality, balanced learning experiences were offered, allowing students and families to more deeply unite their hearts to Christ's Sacred Heart.

In 2024-25, workshops were offered to catechists for further development. We facilitated lifelong learning opportunities and promoted development across all domains, believing that all growth flows from our roots in Christ, with spiritual development being at the heart of progress, the key to our success. For our students to grow, we learned that we as catechists must continue to sow seeds of faith within our souls, bonding more deeply with students and families when we bond more personally with Christ. Venerating Our Lady, Queen of All Saints as our 2024-25 religious education year patroness, we provided mini-retreats focused on the takeaways gained from the lives of saints who honored Our Lady by serving as teachers of holiness. Through catechist formation, we strengthened faith formation delivered to our parish religious education program students and families. In learning to imitate the saints as teachers of holiness, we ultimately

strove to imitate Christ the Teacher and Mary, Mother of Catechists, the greatest role models of virtue who inspired the saints.

As catechists, we will begin again spiritually in our journey through the 2025-26 academic year, entering into Christ's mysteries with Him, leading students and families with us, so that together, we may draw closer to His Heart. In addition to being teachers, we are learners, God's children. Being His spiritual children, we mirror the students we work with in cultivating a sense of wonder and joy for God. Alongside our students, we will practice devotions to Jesus and Mary, engaging with learning materials such as prayer cards and devotional chaplets, to create an inclusive community in which we all learn and grow as members of One Body, Christ's Mystical Body, the Church.

Like Our Lady, we will serve as models of how to live virtuous lives for God: responding to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we will produce good fruits for God, reflecting on our actions in contemplation. Just as Our Lady had a rich interior life, pondering all in her Heart, we will treasure our learnings about Jesus, and use them to create enriching learning experiences that students and families can treasure in their own hearts. Self-reflection will comprise a significant part of our journey as catechists. In reflecting on our teaching decisions throughout the year, we can grow into better educators, educators with intention who draw together all aspects of the learning process harmoniously, and with great meaning, ordering all things towards glorification of God.

Honoring the beautiful Christocentric traditions of our Catholic Faith that unite us all in love for Jesus, our class meetings are celebrations that ignite joy, encouraging a sense of wonder in children and adults. As we combine our talents to give glory to God, we learn from each other on a shared journey of spiritual development, respecting the presence of Christ in each person. We are beyond grateful to be celebrating the goodness of God with you, most of all, because we see His goodness reflected in you. Everyone is called to serve God by using the gifts He gave them. We all can share the good news of God, and empower others to do the same.

The hands of Our Lady held the Son of God, the Christ Child, Who radiated heavenly light, illuminated by great love as He looked into His Mother's eyes, and was humbly cradled in her arms. These hands prayed and worked, nurtured and guided. They still do, passing on graces from God, for Our Lady's soul was always open to God, always consecrated to Him, and could therefore receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit to share with us. Holy angels are purely spiritual

beings, not material beings like us, so they do not have bodies (though for special missions from God, they may take on human form; most definitely, as the catechists within our program!), but Our Lady reflected the holy angels in her sweetness, a luminous love for God shining from her innermost Heart; as a vessel containing Our Lord, every grace from God, the body of Our Lady was elevated by her pure soul. Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, our patroness for the 2025-26 religious education year, will touch our catechists with her grace, that our catechists may pass on the blessings brought by Our Lady through ministry to students and families.

We learn from Our Lady how to imitate the holy angels in loving the Lord, in always immersing ourselves in His light, so as to project the rays of the light of His love into other hearts, that they may be transfigured by His Presence. Wherever Our Lady is, the holy angels are near; they are given to service to her, for she is given to the service of Christ, their King. In a similar way, we pray that our patroness, Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, would help us to serve Our Lord devotedly with our hands, hearts, minds, and souls working in tandem to help shape the soft clay of our students' hearts, that they may be molded to the perfect image of our model, Mary, the mirror image of Our Lord, and that we, too, may conform more closely to the image of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels.

Our Lord dwells within the soul of each person; we are living tabernacles containing His Presence, so we pray to always honor the Spirit of Christ in each student, and remember that when we serve others, we could be entertaining angels unaware. When we greet each person, we may greet their holy guardian angel, too, acknowledging the presence of the holy angels in our hearts. The holy angels are always present for the Holy Mass, assisting the priest, and standing among the people. This year, our goal is to support our priests, students, and families through prayer, to be always with them spiritually as they work and sacrifice for Our Lord, uniting with Him on the altar of His Heart; like the holy angels, we pray to stand by each student, to protect and guide each precious soul, serving as their spiritual guardians like the holy angels, to equip them for service to God, inspire them, bring joy, and help them to cherish the treasures of God in their hearts, that they remain close to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, becoming immaculate conceptions like her as they embrace God's light fully, opening themselves to receiving His Presence. In supporting each other, we help each other to carry our crosses, and can bring joy amidst challenging times, just as the holy angels bring consolation, strengthening those in their care, that they may

transcend the things of this life, to be crowned with glory in Paradise, with Our Lady, Queen of the Angels.

A special focus this year will be on the gemmed cross as a sign of victory in Christ, as a gift to uplift to God like the prayers of the holy angels. The gemmed cross reminds us that each experience in life is an opportunity to become closer to God, and to adorn our hearts with virtues like the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that we may be treasuries for Our Lord, just as His Heart is a treasury of wisdom and knowledge, wisdom of the spirit that flows from love, from union with the Father. Our crosses, when carried joyfully for Christ, allow us to be raised up, and to be filled with the self-sacrificing love of God the Father. We strive to use our experiences to compassionate with all those whom we serve in the Holy Name of Jesus, just as Our Lady of Compassion was spiritually united with Christ on the Cross, standing by Him and consoling His Heart.

It is through friendship with Christ that we enter into deeper communion with each other, and through communion with each other, journey into Heaven, deeper into the Heart of Christ, since God's love knows no bounds, and reaches out to everyone, flourishing in hearts united for His glory. As we cultivate God's garden on Earth, we pray to be helped in our growing process by the holy angels, much like St. Isidore was, that we may prepare a vibrant garden for God in this life, being transplanted into the heavenly garden by flourishing in love, an infinite love that cannot be contained, but is meant to be mirror the depths of love in the Heart of Jesus. We are all flowers reflecting the spiritual beauty of God in unique ways, just as the holy angels each reflect the divine perfections of God, and blossom all the more when we encourage each other in our growth, sharing in the process of learning about God's wonders.

Our Lady teaches us a sense of wonder and awe for God, as she embodied this reverence when the angel, St. Gabriel, appeared to bring her the message that God the Father chose her to be the Mother of His only Son, Jesus. We have the special mission to share the message of God's love with others, and to model to souls how to respond to this message with great faith and hope, that we may always say "yes" to serving God like Our Lady, as well as the holy angels, did. Throughout this year, we will accompany each other spiritually, like the holy angels surrounding Our Lady on such journeys as her procession to the home of her cousin, St. Elizabeth, the first Eucharistic pilgrimage, in which the Christ Child in Our Lady's womb was brought to visit St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist. Likewise, we will carry Our Lord's loving Sacred Heart to others, sharing

in the mission to adore Our Lord, and promote devotion to Him, as one family in Christ, traveling together on the way to union with Him.

New initiatives this year include the Children of Mary Sodality, an expanded youth ministry for students in middle and high school, and spring catechist formation workshops. Our Children of Mary Sodality is designed to deepen devotion to Our Lady, especially in preparation for First Holy Communion, as our students learn to imitate the holy angels in service to Mother Mary and Jesus. Similarly, our youth ministry to students in middle and high school has the goal of affording students hands-on opportunities to apply what they learn about leadership from Christ, so as to serve Him and His people with angelic love. Catechist formation workshops in the spring will involve presentations focused on what it means to develop and apply virtues as religious educators, that we may emulate the holy angels in helping students to grow in their relationships with Our Lord.

Besides offering catechist workshops in Spring 2026, throughout the academic year, we will offer opportunities to share in love for God through celebration of Holy Masses for students, families, catechists, and friends of our religious education program at OLV. In preparation for religious education Holy Masses and classes, we will facilitate meetings for catechists to convene and discuss how we may further strengthen our program. We will collaborate in developing program initiatives, reflecting on the efficacy of past initiatives to revitalize program offerings going forward, with the especial aim of increasing reverence for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament by imitating the holy angels in adoration of Our Savior. Past traditions honoring catechists will continue, including the commissioning and blessing of catechists at the annual opening year religious education Holy Mass, at which catechists will respond to God's call to share His love with students and families. Just as roses, signs of God's love that lift our spirits and heal us, are blessed, so, too are our catechists, the ones who contribute to growth in faith and bless others, bringing joy and serving as a sign of faith in the Son, pointing to the living remedy, the Holy Eucharist, blessed. Just as flowers convey their sweet fragrance far and wide, our catechists spread the fragrance of holiness that comes from closeness to the sweet Hearts of Jesus and Mother Mary.

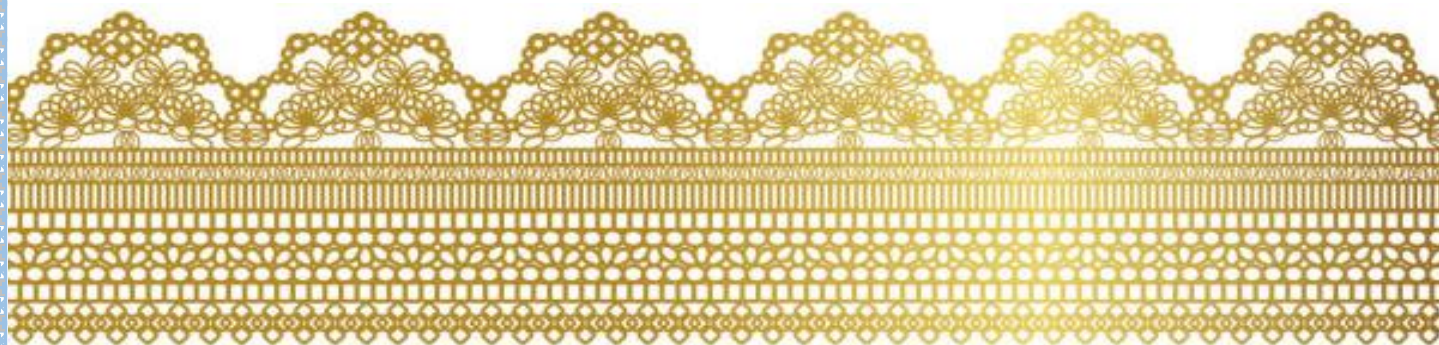
We continue to invite catechists to participate in the Masses of Confirmation and First Holy Communion as well, surrounding students with Christ's joy and love as they receive His graces from His Heart in the sacraments. This year, we welcome catechists to volunteer to serve as sponsors for any student or adult

Confirmation candidates in need of them, so that we may continue to grow in faith together as a parish family, sharing in each other's journeys closer to the Heart of Jesus. Candidates choose patron saints at Confirmation to serve as their heavenly friends, and choose sponsors to serve as their earthly friends, leading them closer to union with Jesus, Our Lady of the Angels, the holy angels, and saints in Heaven. Our friendships only forge a deeper friendship with Christ, that we may treasure His Sacred Heart exceedingly, coming to know His love through the hearts of others who reflect His Presence.

May God bless you for your saintliness as you support us in forming future saints! May Our Lady send you many blessings from her hands for your angelic kindness in helping our students to emulate the holy angels in veneration of Our Lady, and adoration of Our Lord! We pray that Our Lady, Queen of the Angels would hold you close to her Immaculate Heart, keeping you under her mantle, and guiding you closer to glory for all of the glorious ways in which you honor her and her Son, Jesus.

In union with the Hearts of Jesus and Mother Mary,

Katie



## Engaging with our Religious Education Program as a Catechist: Channels of Communication

As we prepare for a new year with fresh creative possibilities for heightened spiritual engagement, we seek to expand our offerings to students and families, and to continue growing our parish family, including our team of volunteers. To communicate about opportunities for assisting us in our religious education program at OLV, we will continue utilizing our Flocknote email platform, bulletin announcements, church bulletin board flyers, and our parish website.

### Completing the Catechist Signup Process

- ✝ To complete a catechist volunteer form indicating how you would like to assist with our program in the 2025-26 religious education year:
  - Submit an electronic Google Form by visiting this link:  
<https://forms.gle/nUhR7PrQeuagmQER7>
  - Access a printable form on our website:  
<https://olveasthampton.org/religious-education/>
    - Or print the following page
      - Email your form to [sadakierski.olv@gmail.com](mailto:sadakierski.olv@gmail.com)
      - Bring to the rectory at 33 Adams St., Easthampton, MA 01027 (in an envelope marked ATTN: Katie Sadakierski, DRE)

### Staying Informed about our Religious Education Program & Accessing Additional Resources

- ✝ We utilize Flocknote to communicate information about happenings in the religious education program to families and catechists. When you officially volunteer as a catechist by completing and submitting our religious education volunteer form, you are automatically signed up by the DRE to begin receiving general religious education emails and catechist notes, which will include the materials and information needed in advance of our religious education classes, including sample activities, lesson plans, as well as reflections on the themes and patron saints for each month's class.
  - Now, we have launched a special religious education enrichment group on Flocknote. When you sign up as a member of this group, you will receive emails about special feast days, devotions, and traditions in the Church. This intergenerational faith formation initiative is meant to provide encouragement and inspiration for adults and children who are learning and growing in their

knowledge of God. To receive enrichment emails from religious education, sign up here:

<https://OurLadyoftheValley23.flocknote.com/Enrichment>

- To receive enrichment emails related to the traditional liturgy (Traditional Latin Mass), sign up here:

<https://ourladyofthevalley23.flocknote.com/OurLadyoftheVal5>

- ✝ All religious education program materials, including a digital version of this handbook, are available on our website, which is maintained by the DRE to keep our program students, families, and volunteers apprised of new developments in the religious education program.
  - Please refer to our parish's homepage, which includes a religious education section. This section houses a copy of the monthly program newsletter, along with a list of dates, times, and locations of upcoming program events
    - OLV website homepage: <https://olveasthampton.org/>
  - To navigate to the religious education webpage on our parish website, you may first visit the homepage, and choose "Religious Education" from the tabs on the top navigation pane. The religious education webpage archives all of our program learning materials from 2022 onward, from newsletters and activity packets to links to activity submission forms.
  - To navigate to specific sections of the religious education webpage, please use the table of contents at the top of the webpage, which has clickable links to lead you to further sections of the page, including our Catechist Corner, where you may access all materials for catechists.
    - OLV website religious education webpage: <https://olveasthampton.org/religious-education/>
- ✝ Updates on religious education program happenings for students, families, and catechists are regularly published in our parish bulletin, available in print and online.
  - For digital versions of current and past Our Lady of the Valley parish bulletins, visit this site: <https://parishesonline.com/organization/our-lady-of-the-valley-parish1>
    - Subscribe to receive bulletins delivered to your email inbox



## Our Lady of the Valley 2025-26 Religious Education Program Volunteer Form

Thank you for your interest in assisting with Our Lady of the Valley's religious education program this year!

Please provide us with your contact information so that we may keep you informed as we develop our program offerings this year. Once received, we will add you to our email list for volunteers.

We will be in touch with you with further details about future volunteering opportunities! With any questions, please email OLV DRE Katie Sadakierski at [sadakierski.olv@gmail.com](mailto:sadakierski.olv@gmail.com).

We are grateful to you for sharing your time and talent with us! Thank you again, and God bless you!

*Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, pray for us!*

1. First and last name:

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2. Email address:

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3. Phone number:

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4. Mailing address:

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5. How would you like to assist with our program this year? Please select as many options as you would like:

- ☐ Catechist: lead a learning center, aid in program planning, and/or tutoring
- ☐ Assistant catechist: assist the lead catechist at a learning center
- ☐ Catechist substitute: fill in for a catechist when they cannot attend classes
- ☐ Rel. Ed. Event/Hospitality Volunteer: assist with program events for families
- ☐ Sacrament Preparation Assistant: assist with First Holy Communion and Confirmation

☐ Youth Group Assistant (grades 7-9 and 10-12): assist with meetings, outings

☐ Children of Mary Sodality Assistant: lead Marian learning centers (PK-2 or 3-6)

6. Is there a specific grade range you would prefer to work with as a rel. ed. program catechist/event volunteer?

☐ Yes, grades PK-2

☐ Yes, grades 3-6

☐ Yes, grades 7-9

☐ I am open to working with any of the grade ranges

7. Would you like to receive a print copy of our catechist handbook?

☐ Yes

☐ I will access it online (digital download on parish website)

8. Will you be available to attend our catechist meeting on Saturday, August 23, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the parish hall?

☐ Yes

☐ Possibly; I will confirm closer to the date

☐ No; please email me to follow up after the meeting

9. Please provide comments and questions here. Thank you!

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## Catechist Formation Standards

Learning is lifelong. God's love is eternal. Our journey of knowing God is one that transcends earthly life. As we learn more about Him in this life, we prepare to know Him face-to-face in the next. The following standards provide guidelines for how catechists may continue to be formed in their faith, and come to form others in faith through sharing what they have learned in their journey to know God.

Catechist Standard	Formation Initiative
CS#1: Connects to children & families through a joyful spirit of childlike wonder for God	The catechist draws from their relationship with Christ, the source of their joy, which informs their interactions with others. May practice devotions that center their hearts and minds on Christ, such as Eucharistic Adoration or the Holy Rosary, to inspire reflection on the joy Christ brings through His holy Presence. In our program, the catechist leads students in dynamic, interactive learning centers
CS#2: Has a willingness to share their love for God with others	The catechist not only uses words to evangelize, but communicates love and care for others through their actions. They practice Catholic hospitality by welcoming others warmly, inviting them to learn about Christ in community, on a journey of mutual growth. The catechist models what it means to be a Christian, a "little Christ" who brings His spirit of charity into the world, so as to inspire others to be Christlike, too
CS#3: Reflects on how God has worked in their life; draws meaning	The catechist may practice reflective journaling, or respond to the activities/prompts from lessons the

from past experiences and relates these to students and families	<p>students are working on. They connect concepts to their lives so that students may see the learning material put into action, understanding what it means in a lived, practiced context.</p> <p>Catechists share what they have learned, reminding students that the joy of learning is that it never ends, with there always being something new to discover about the infinite goodness of God. In journaling or charting their growth in verbal conversations, catechists map out how God has worked in their lives, pointing out His constant Presence to others. In our program, the catechist relates their interests and experiences to those of the saints, helping students to make these connections as well</p>
CS#4: Has a foundational knowledge of the catechism of the Catholic Church	<p>May engage in regular review of the current catechism/past catechisms to understand how Church teachings have been preserved by the Magisterium over time, and to further understand the integral connection of these teachings to practice of the Faith; may also review catechetical documents/papal encyclicals on catechesis (listed in this handbook) to enhance understanding not only of the Church's teachings themselves, but of how they have been transmitted for generations; will apply this understanding to teaching catechism to today's faithful</p>
CS#5: Has foundational biblical knowledge (core stories of the Old and New Testaments)	<p>May attend Adult Education sessions and/or parish Bible studies to further understand Scriptural truths, uncover deeper meanings of stories. In our</p>

	program, the catechist assists students in navigating Scriptural readings, assisting them in locating and interpreting passages from the Bible
CS#6: Links Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in dialogue with children and families to share the traditions of the Church (oral and written)	The catechist connects readings from the Bible to the events of the liturgical year, and to the sacraments as a whole. In keeping Christ and the Holy Mass central to the conversation, the catechist draws the student into a deeper relationship with Christ, demonstrating to students that God ultimately connects all things, bringing harmony and order in His perfection. The catechist has an awareness of how liturgical devotions and traditions celebrated by families emerge from Sacred Tradition
CS#7: Is practicing the Catholic Faith and living in harmony with the Gospel	The catechist is passionate about their faith. They communicate their love for God in participating in the liturgy with the parish family. Catechists endeavor to actively engage in parish life, sharing in the joy of the community, and the universal Church as a whole, in experiencing the love of Christ through Sacred Tradition, the sacraments celebrated since the beginning of the Church
CS#8: Is dedicated to spiritual growth and engages in lifelong learning; seeks to continually draw closer to Christ; has a prayerful spirit and commitment to the interior life	Use of self-evaluation tools, such as a journal or worksheets; regular review of the catechist handbook, including standards, to reflect on alignment with these guidelines; engagement in catechist meetings and workshops/learning series sessions; prayerful consideration of/response to feedback; may complete further catechetical leadership training

	through in-person workshops in the diocese and/or online. In our program, the catechist utilizes this handbook and other program learning materials, promoting prayerfulness through use of prayer cards and devotional items
CS#9: Looks with the eyes of the soul to see the presence of Christ in all people; practices charity by honoring the dignity of each human being, respectfully acknowledging that all people are made in His image and likeness	The catechist has a spirit of inclusion and adaptability, welcoming students of all abilities and needs with kindness and compassion. Catechists work together with families to help accommodate students and individualize instruction to meet their unique needs. The catechist has an awareness of various learning styles, and in facilitating learning experiences for students, teaches to these unique learning styles, encouraging students to contribute their special knowledge and skills to classroom experiences, with the understanding that their gifts are God-given, intended by God to be used for His glory
CS#10: Has an openness to facilitating creative and enriching learning experiences for children; may utilize new technologies in evangelizing	Uses tools and resources incorporated into the religious education program, such as Flocknote and the religious education website, to engage with content and remain informed of program happenings. May suggest ideas for new ways of leveraging digital and print communications to further engage students and families
CS#11: Has a passion for proclaiming the good news of Jesus, and is devoted to building His Kingdom through sharing knowledge of Him, so as to promote the salvation of souls	May reflect on Scriptural readings and emulate biblical evangelists (i.e. the Samaritan woman at the well, St. Mary Magdalene), bringing the good news of the Gospel to others through their words and actions. Has a

	familiarity with ways of evangelizing; knows the difference between evangelization and catechesis; bridges these two actions, synthesizing their knowledge to inspire others to deepen their relationship with Christ
CS#12: Accommodates the special needs of children and families; promotes inclusion through adaptive teaching practices; has an awareness of diverse learning styles/modalities for fulfilling special needs	May engage in online or in-person trainings for working with people with special needs in the Church through the NCPD (National Catholic Partnership on Disability) or the NCCL (National Community of Catechetical Leaders); may engage in learning about child development
CS#13: Contributes to creating a safe environment for children and families; complies with safe environment training standards in the diocese; treats children and families with sensitivity, gentleness, and empathy; is trustworthy and respectful of boundaries	The catechist completes safe environment training modules for the diocese when new content becomes available. They submit print materials, including CORI forms and code of conduct forms, when new compliance cycles begin. Catechists may keep abreast of new policies and best practices for maintaining a safe environment by completing Virtus training bulletins online

## **Mary, Mother of Catechists and Queen of All Saints: Our Model of Faith**

In each new year of religious education at Our Lady of the Valley, we are guided by a patron saint who inspires us to grow closer to God, providing a model of faith that we may emulate as we strive to enlighten others with knowledge of God's love. The example of a patron saint illuminates our minds with understanding, demonstrating to us how to live out faith, hope, and love.

Last year, we turned to Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, to provide inspiration and encouragement for us as we aim to shape future saints, and will continue to honor her this year, as we go to the holy saints and angels to guide our spiritual development, that we may augment the spiritual development of others. Working with saints-in-the-making, we are reminded of the dignity of all people, the potential for growth each soul has. We humbly keep our hearts open to learning from others, who support us in our own path to sainthood.

Mother Mary is the Queen of Heaven. Heaven is peopled with saints, people who loved God in their earthly lives, and now love Him forever, praising Him with the angels. This means that Our Lady is Queen of every saint in Heaven. She inspired the saints in their earthly lives to better love Jesus. The saints invoked her prayers to help them become saints, knowing that Our Lady is the greatest saint, the one who knows the most about what it means to love God. Through devotion to Our Lady, we, too, can become saints, and help others along this path to Heaven. Mary, the human being who was closest to Jesus, draws us into a deeper relationship with Him.

To help others further know and love Jesus, then, we are called to be like Mother Mary, spiritual mothers who nurture holy qualities in others. Our Lady, as a Mother, brings new life into being. She inspires birth and growth in our souls, helping us to bring our love of God into the world, and to use our gifts to bring about deeper conversion in others, so that they may find new life in Christ.

Mother Mary is the Mother of Catechists, because she teaches us how to teach. We teach by example, modeling a life of faith, hope, and love through joyful service to God that mirrors the willingness of Jesus and Mary to answer God the Father's call.

There are ten evangelical virtues, holy qualities, that are associated with Mother Mary. As we endeavor to imitate the virtues of Our Lady, we will focus on five particular virtues that we can embody in order to fulfill our thirteen catechist standards, the guidelines for being the best teachers in faith that we can be. Five is the number of love, the number of holy wounds Christ received out of love for

us, as a self-gift. As we imitate these five virtues of Mother Mary, we will come to love God more, and thus, inspire greater love in the students who see the depth of joy in our hearts.

### **1. Mother Most Humble**

In living for God, we do not lose our will, but reach the point where we want only to do God's will, to become what He has called us to be. Our will, then, is to do His will. God gives every human free will, wanting us to choose to follow Him freely, out of love. Love is a valuable, beautiful treasure that warms the heart. God wants a deep relationship with every human, such is His love for us. He wants us to know the joy of love, which is what gives life to the soul.

Our Lady was humble, wanting only what God wanted. Adam and Eve did not trust in God's Wisdom, wanting what they willed for themselves, and believing themselves to be above God, wiser than Him, in their pride. Mother Mary, however, had faith, humbly trusting that His plan was for the best, beyond what a human could envision. Our Lady believed in God's transcendence, knowing He is the greatest, the Creator of all things. In her humble love and obedience for God, she chose to answer His call, to be His handmaid, doing as He asked, with the trust that anything He asked would be good, for the purpose of saving souls. Our Lady wanted to serve God, to magnify Him by embodying His goodness in her own being, to the extent that She would carry His Son.

Our Lady's humbleness provides inspiration for us to be servant leaders, too, teachers who instruct through an example of generosity and kindness. To be humble is to receive God into the heart, and to give what we have received. We share with others, as we put God before ourselves, wanting what He wills: the best for everyone. A humble heart is one that is open to learning, recognizing that we always may grow more, and come to love God better. Humbleness fills us with joy, as there is always something to look forward to, more discoveries awaiting us. When we have humility, we have hope for growth and change, belief in God's ability to transform us even more deeply each day, until we are saints.

A humble heart derives the most joy from serving God and others. The greatest gift to the humble heart is the opportunity to give the gift of oneself. Like Christ, we offer a self-gift, pouring our hearts and souls into caring for the souls of others. We ask Our Lady, Mother Most Humble, for her special intercession in helping us to fulfill our second and tenth catechist standards, to share our love for God with others, as well as to be open to learning and using new, creative approaches to spiritually engage our students and families.

## **2. Mother Most Prudent**

Prudence is a special kind of wisdom, an ability to discern well, to make sound judgments when it comes time to make a decision. The prudent person is thoughtful, considering the needs of others to ultimately ensure that the right course of action is taken. Prudent decision-makers rely not only on academic knowledge, wisdom that comes from study of ideas, but on the knowledge of the heart and soul. True prudence comes from the conscience. When we act with prudence, we act from a deep understanding of what is right, opposed to what is wrong.

To be faithful to God, Our Lady had to have prudence. She knew that remaining faithful would mean saying “yes” to God. Human knowledge is limited, but God’s Wisdom is unlimited, because He knows all. Our Lady had the wisdom to trust in God’s Wisdom. Our Lady knew that to put her faith in God was to put her faith in the right place.

In our ministry of catechesis, we ask Our Lady to help us to continue learning and growing. We call on Our Lady to nurture our minds and hearts as we gain wisdom from studying the words and actions of Christ, which guide our own words and actions as we teach. May Our Lady, Mother Most Prudent, intercede for us as we strive to fulfill our third, fourth, fifth, and sixth catechist standards: to wisely draw meaning from how God has worked in our lives; to know and understand the catechism of the Church; to know and understand the word of God, Sacred Scripture; and to know how Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition complement each other.

## **3. Mother Most Patient**

In the second chapter of Luke, we read of Christ’s Nativity, His birth. We also read of a kind of rebirth in Our Lady’s heart, filled with so much love for the newborn Christ Child, her precious Son. “Reflecting” on “all these things,” she “kept” them in her heart. Mother Mary patiently absorbed into her heart all she received from God as He revealed more about Himself over time.

Our Lady had a rich interior life. She was attuned to the life of her soul, savoring the knowledge she collected from around her, especially as she watched her Son grow, keeping every special memory of Him within her Heart. Our Lady was reflective, contemplating deeply all she took in. From her, we learn how to process all that happens outside of ourselves by bringing it deep within, to offer to God, as we speak to Him within our hearts. She shows us how to make an altar

of the heart, to make of every experience an offering, giving it to God to transform.

Patience flows from a life of prayer, as Our Lady shows. Our Lady could be prudent and faithful, because in patiently bringing everything to God in prayer, she recognized His voice, knowing how to respond to Him, since she listened so closely to the rhythms of His Heart within her own. We pray that Our Lady, Mother Most Patient, will guide us in meeting the eleventh and twelfth catechist standards: to passionately share the good news of Jesus as evangelists; and to accommodate the needs of children.

#### **4. Mother Most Faithful**

Our Lady said “yes” to God’s special plan for her. God the Father chose her to become the Mother of His only Son, Jesus. Mary is mother of Christ, the Teacher. Christ taught through parables, conveying His knowledge of God the Father through everyday examples that His audiences would understand. When He taught, Christ taught on His own authority: He did not quote other teachers, but drew all of His teachings directly from His Heavenly Father; being God, the Son, Himself, Jesus taught the Truth through His own example.

Mary and Jesus mirror each other in their faithfulness to God the Father. Mother Mary is the New Eve, since she was obedient. Whereas Eve’s disobedience brought sin into the world, Mother Mary’s faithfulness to God, her willingness to answer His call, brought hope and healing into the world as Mother Mary gave birth to Christ, Our Savior. Jesus is the New Adam, because He, too, was obedient to God, accepting every aspect of God the Father’s plan for salvation. Through every experience, even as they carried their own crosses, Jesus and Mary did not despair, having faith that God the Father would fulfill His promises. They followed His plan, knowing it was for the good of all.

Mother Mary teaches us to stand beside Jesus, to remain loyal to God. She stood by the Cross. This action of faith required all of her bravery and strength, which inspires us to be faithful, too, in knowing the depth of love that allowed her to persevere. May Our Lady guide us in faithfully teaching God’s truth, and supporting our students in being faithful to His teachings.

We ask Our Lady, Mother Most Faithful, to help us in fulfilling our first, seventh, and eighth catechist standards: to cultivate and encourage a sense of childlike wonder; to live out our beliefs in practicing the Faith; and to engage in lifelong learning about our Faith.

## 5. Mother Most Merciful

Our Lady is the Mediatrix of All Graces. A mediator is a go-between who reconciles people, someone who serves as a bridge between separate groups. Mediators unify people, bringing all things together for the common good. Our Lady is also a mediator. She is a channel of grace, which is to say, someone through whom graces flow. When we ask for the intercession of Our Lady, she brings our prayers to her Son, Jesus. Being closest to Him, she can bring us special graces from Him. A faithful Son, Our Lord loves His Mother, and honors the requests she brings to Him. Our Lady is a special intercessor, a mediator, for us, as she brings us closer to Christ. Mother Mary helps us to grow in virtue, and open our hearts to receiving more of God's graces. Conceived without sin, Mother Mary is the Immaculate Conception, full of every grace, instead of sin.

Being so enriched with graces, a whole treasury of them in her soul, Mother Mary has a tremendous capacity for love and mercy. In her mercy, she wants to save souls by bringing people to her Son, the Savior. Gentle and kind, Mother Mary has a heart of compassion, a heart that goes out to our hearts, feeling for us very deeply. Mother Mary's life experiences allowed her to know how we feel. Like Mother Mary, all excellent teachers learn from their experiences, and use them to reach out to others with understanding and compassion. Merciful teachers feel for their students, opening their hearts to empathizing with them, and listening. We ask Our Lady, Mother Most Merciful, to help us to achieve our ninth and thirteenth catechist standards: to respect the dignity of others; and to maintain a safe environment with sensitivity and charity.

Mother Mary will be with us in our teaching experiences, helping us to use the graces God has given us to touch the hearts of others. She feels for us, knowing the joy and love we have for God, and will help us to share all of this with students in the most meaningful, special ways when we ask for her intercession.

Above all, may Mother Mary draw us close to her Immaculate Heart, so that we may gather up her virtues like so many gems, and treasure them within our own hearts.

## **Guide to Praying the Chaplet for the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Praying the Chaplet for the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary is recommended to guide your contemplation of the virtues of Mary. In prayer and contemplation, God will guide us to know how to apply them in active imitation of Our Lady.

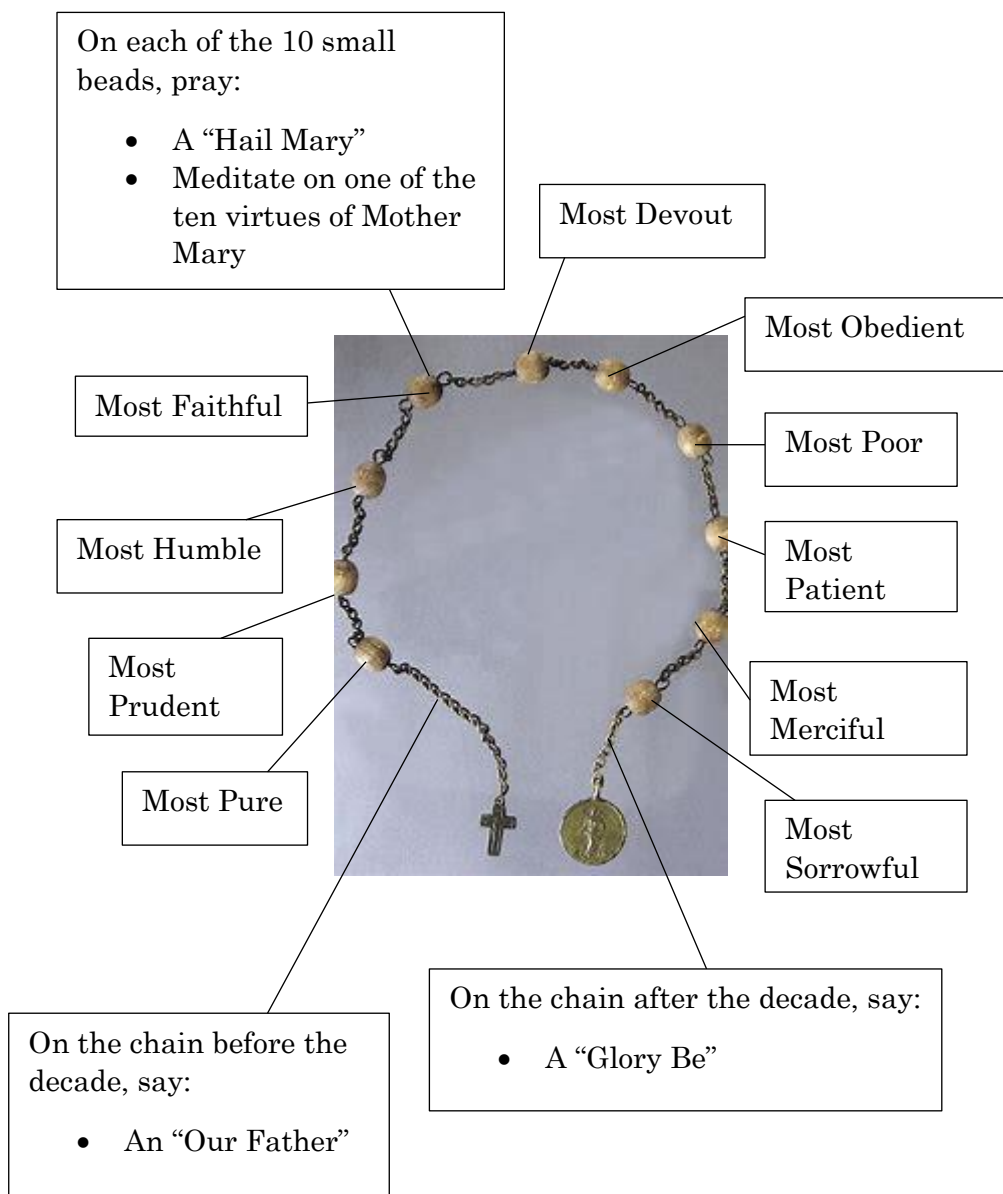
Ten is the biblical number of happiness. No small wonder, then, that there are ten evangelical virtues of Mother Mary, who is often represented through a ten-point star in honor of Her virtues, which allow Her to shine. In following Mother Mary, striving to imitate each of Her holy qualities, we can discover true happiness, not only in an earthly sense, but in eternal life. Serving God as Mother Mary did can lead us to Heaven, where we can praise Him with Her forever.

Just as there are ten Commandments we are called to follow in order to fully love God and others, allowing for deep, lasting joy, the Gospels outline ten virtues that Mother Mary lived out, illustrating Her character of holiness. Her titles are: Most Pure, Most Prudent, Most Humble, Most Faithful, Most Devout, Most Obedient, Most Poor, Most Patient, Most Merciful, and Most Sorrowful. Eleven is the biblical number relating to sin; Mother Mary helped to undo the effects of sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve, as She steadfastly followed God's Commandments, fully exemplifying faith, hope, and charity, charity being the greatest.

Lovingly offering up Her suffering for sinners through Her experiences of sorrow, Mother Mary could even more greatly embody virtues such as obedience, humility, and mercy, since She took on suffering to heal brokenness in the world, allowing Her to empathize on the deepest level with Her spiritual children. All virtues are treasured in Mother Mary's Heart, ensconced in the depths of Her soul, where we find them inlaid like gems on Her heavenly crown. Each admirable spiritual quality She has flows from Her love, whose source is the love of God.

Devotion to Our Lady through meditation on the Ten Virtues was spread by the Sisters of the Annunciation in the 1500s. Members of this religious order follow the Rule of the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, meaning they live their lives in accordance with the Ten Virtues, being guided by Mother Mary as their example. Each of the ten beads in the Chaplet of the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary is dedicated to one of Her virtues. As we pray this chaplet, we honor the Most Holy Name of Mary (feast day: September 12), praising Her virtues through using Her titles with reverence. Each title reflects one of the titles of Jesus, Whose Most Holy Name is linked with Mother Mary's. Growing in love for Mother Mary, we will be led closer to Jesus, for Mary, the luminescent star, reflects the sun, Her Son, the greatest star in the heavens.

- ♥ Make the Sign of the Cross. Kiss the crucifix.
- ♥ As with the Dominican Rosary, begin with an “Our Father.”
- ♥ On each of the 10 small beads, say a “Hail Mary.”
  - For each “Hail Mary,” reflect on one of the virtues of Our Lady.
  - After the words “Mother of God” in the prayer, insert one of the Marian titles (i.e. “most pure”), and continue with “pray for us sinners...”
- ♥ Say a “Glory Be” on the chain after the “Hail Mary” prayers.
- ♥ Kiss the crucifix and make the Sign of the Cross again.



## Our Lady of the Angels and the Guardian Angel Chaplet

In 1216, St. Francis of Assisi received a vision of Our Lord and Our Lady while in the Portiuncula chapel he was restoring. Saint Francis of Assisi had been called to build up the Church, which he was accomplishing through God's grace, by sharing in the mission of the Fisherman of Souls, Our Lord, to bring souls to Heaven. He developed the Franciscan order, and had received the Portiuncula, meaning "Little Portion," from the Benedictines, who were willing to give the chapel to St. Francis at no cost, for his community.

In his dedication to the evangelical counsel of poverty, however, St. Francis practiced angelic dedication in still giving gifts of thanksgiving to the Benedictines, paying "rent," through offerings of fish freshly caught from the local river! Saint Francis worked and prayed diligently to "catch" souls for Christ, simply by teaching through example, living his life as a continuous prayer of faith, hope, and love offered wholeheartedly to God. He imitated the holy angels in their joy, peace, and diligence, responding to God's messages by bringing the message of His merciful love to all.

While St. Francis of Assisi appeared to have just a "little portion" in living in poverty, he had the greatest portion of opening his heart completely to be filled entirely by God's love, that he may offer the biggest portions of Christ's Heart to others. Caringly repairing what was broken, St. Francis helped to bring healing to the Church, doing all to give glory to God, in union with the holy angels and their Queen. On that providential evening in 1216 when St. Francis of Assisi not only entertained angels as his guest, but Our Lady, Queen of the Angels and Our Lord, he was asked about any special requests he had, any spiritual gifts he would like to receive, as a reward for his hard work. Saint Francis requested that a special plenary indulgence (a full indulgence absolving one of temporal punishment) be given to all those who go to Confession before visiting the Portiuncula on August 2, the Feast of Our Lady of Angels, to whom the Portiuncula is dedicated. He asked that the indulgence be extended to those who visit churches throughout the world on that day as well, a request granted by Our Lord.

Saint Francis had asked that Our Lady bring the petition to Our Lord, recognizing that Our Lady embellishes our good works and prayers, adorning them all the more, to glorify God the most, so that when she brings them to the throne of Our Lord, they touch His Heart greatly. Rewarded for his humility, generosity, and angelic sweetness, St. Francis of Assisi received all that he had asked for, and more, helping others to grow closer to Our Lord, the Bread of the Angels, and Our Lady, Queen of the Angels. We each receive a "little portion" of Heaven to help us on our way to Heaven, to guide us in our own special callings from God to restore His Church, and promote unity in His Sacred Heart: our holy guardian angel, our helper, instructor, and friend, our companion on the way to receiving a "big portion" of God's love, many treasures in Heaven from the infinite love in His Heart. Our holy guardian angels help us to remain close to their Queen, and to have pure hearts of love for Our Lord resembling the Immaculate Heart of Mary; in praying the Chaplet of the Guardian Angels, we call upon our holy guardian angel to help us to enthrone Our Lord and Our Lady in our hearts, and to be like them in service to God.

The Chaplet of the Guardian Angels consists of ten beads in total. On the Guardian Angel medal, the Guardian Angel prayer is prayed. A "Glory Be" prayer is prayed on the first seven beads in the chaplet, as we give glory to God like Our Lady, Queen of the Angels and the holy angels in Heaven do, for seven is the number of perfection and completion; in giving glory to God, in striving to reflect His light like the holy angels do, we can be perfected and completed.

It is appropriate that the Chaplet of the Guardian Angels is made up of ten beads, since ten is the number of happiness. There are Ten Commandments, and following each of the Commandments brings us happiness, because we are doing what God wills; what God wills is perfect, because He wills true love, a love that grows from joyful sacrifice. Cultivating friendships with the angels, who

remain always at our side, will surely bring us happiness, as the angels praise God always, and can teach us how to glorify Him in all that we do as well.

Praying the Chaplet of the Guardian Angels is appropriate at any time, for the angels are always with us, and we would do well to acknowledge their holy presence, which has the power to sanctify us in turn. However, October 2, the feast day of the Guardian Angels, is an especially apt time to remember our holy guardian angels when we pray, as is every Tuesday, the day of the week traditionally consecrated to the holy angels. Whenever we pray for the intercession of the holy guardian angels, entrusting ourselves more deeply to them, we can share in their spiritual joy; in their closeness to God, they bring consolation to our hearts, helping us to feel God's love in all seasons of life.

As we pray the Chaplet of the Guardian Angels, may we reflect on how we may each give glory to the Lord, with the assistance of our holy angels, who are watching over us to keep us near Our Lord, so that we all may praise Him forever in Heaven one day.

- **Make the Sign of the Cross. Kiss the Guardian Angel medal.**
- **On the Guardian Angel medal, pray the Guardian Angel prayer:**  
 “Angel of God, my Guardian dear,  
 To whom His love commits me here,  
 Ever this day be at my side,  
 To light and guard, rule and guide. Amen.”
- **On each of the first seven beads of the chaplet, pray a “Glory Be”**
- **On the set of three beads, pray the following prayers in honor of your guardian angel:**
  - Pray an “Our Father”
  - Pray a “Hail Mary”
  - Pray a “Glory Be”
- **Complete the chaplet by praying the St. Michael prayer:**  
 “St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who roam through the world, seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.”
- **Then, pray the following invocation three times:**  
 “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Have mercy on us. We place all our trust in thee.”
- **Kiss the crucifix. Make the Sign of the Cross.**

On each of the seven small beads:

- Pray a “Glory Be”



On the first bead in the set of three large beads:

- Pray an “Our Father”

On the second:

- Pray a “Hail Mary”

On the third:

- Pray a “Glory Be”

On the Guardian Angel medal:

- Pray the “Guardian Angel Prayer”

In closing:

- Pray the “St. Michael Prayer”
- Pray the three invocations: “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus...”

## **Imitating the Choirs of the Holy Angels in our Ministries as Catechists**

As catechists, we have a special mission to reflect the holy angels, who are instructors in the way of holiness. They deliver prayers, messages of love between God and human beings, teaching us how to convey our love to God in friendship with Him. When we reflect on the choirs of holy angels, we can consider their ranks to be as ascending stairs, like the levels in Bloom's Taxonomy that speak to what it means to make developmental progress. The organization of the choirs of holy angels provides a framework for our own spiritual growth. There are nine choirs of holy angels, nine being the number of prayer, honoring God's creations who pray so devotedly for us, that we may join them in giving glory to God. As we ascend through the nine choirs, we pray, asking God to help us to imitate them in their devotion and love.

We are called to begin with the choir of Angels, who care directly for human beings, serving as our guardians. Before we can help students to grow in content knowledge, the catechism of the Church, we are to build the foundations for their growth, first developing friendships with our students to lead them to friendship with Christ. Trust and love is the foundation for all growth. From there, exponential progress can happen. When we lay down good roots, we have the means by which to receive the nutrients we need for continued growth. We imitate the holy guardian angels in remaining faithfully alongside our students, helping them and tending to their learning needs.

Next, we ascend to the choir of Archangels. Archangels may assist holy guardian angels when the souls entrusted to their care are in great need. Whereas angels may oversee everyday human needs, archangels fulfill special missions from God in the created world, delivering the most essential messages, such as God the Father's message to Our Lady that she was chosen to become the Mother of God the Son. While there are seven archangels we know of that stand before the throne of God at all times, there are just three named in Sacred Scripture: St. Gabriel, St. Michael, and St. Raphael. Saint Michael is the defender of the Church who defeated Satan, casting him out of Heaven. He is a warrior who helps us to fight the good fight in the spiritual battle. Meanwhile, St. Gabriel is the holy angel assigned as a special patron of Our Lady, and to all those who have a devotion to her, including those who are devoted to the Holy Spirit in a special way, as Our Lady is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. His name means "God's strength," paying homage to when he assisted Our Lord during His Passion, and to when he strengthens us to carry our crosses as well. A messenger, St. Gabriel is a special patron for contemplatives who devote themselves to communicating

interiorly with God through prayer, and for all those involved in communications. Lastly, St. Raphael is a special patron for happy meetings, friendships, and travels, a consoling companion on the journey to Heaven, whose name means “God’s medicine.” A healing angel, St. Raphael’s intercession helped to heal Tobias’ father, Tobit, of blindness, and the woman whom Tobias would marry, Sarah, of spiritual affliction. We can reflect the love of the archangels in all that we do as catechists. First, we may commit ourselves to preserving and guarding the treasures of the Church, defending God’s Truth like St. Michael, especially in equipping students with the prayers that will aid them in the spiritual battle, like the Holy Rosary, that they may triumph with Christ over the Cross. Second, we may imitate St. Gabriel in being communicators of God’s love, that souls may be strengthened by His charity. We may echo St. Gabriel in praying the “Hail Mary” with great reverence, living out our devotion to Our Lady by embodying the qualities of the Queen of Angels, and sharing her maternal love with others. Third, we may reflect St. Raphael, the healer, in leading souls to the remedies they need, guiding our students to read Sacred Scripture, the prescription for spiritual health that our souls require, and to receive the sacraments, which contain the medicine we need for every ailment, the love of God. Like St. Raphael, we can be guides on the journey, bringing joy on the way to Heaven.

The third choir of angels we progress to is the Principalities, which watch over principalities in the created world, namely, cities, nations, and kingdoms. These holy angels oversee dioceses and parishes, praying for every parishioner at a given local church. They pray in a particular way that parishioners would receive the holy sacraments, and that God would be merciful with them. When the church is empty, they adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Their intentions are very pure, for they seek only to do God’s good work for His glory. We pray that we, as catechists, would catechize in how we live our faith, serving as joyful, active participants in parish life who, through receiving the graces of the sacraments, can encourage others to receive Our Lord in a state of grace, and enter into deeper communion with Him. We pray for our parish family, and ask Our Lord to help us to always teach and guide with hearts of pure love, helping to guide students in their intentions, too, that they may pray to Our Lord with pure hearts. Angels in this choir celebrate the feast day of their parish’s patron with much zeal, offering all of their parish’s good works to God on that day, rejoicing when there are many. They help us to persevere in prayer, and are the perfect friends to petition in our ministries to guide other souls to complete good works and offer prayers of love to God.

Now, we ascend to the fourth choir of holy angels, the Powers. The Powers have a special power over evil, helping souls in their spiritual combat. They are to be invoked for strength to transcend temptations, to practice virtue over vice, and to acquire good habits, that one may avoid sin. Angels in the choir of Powers are often assigned to priests, giving the priestly souls entrusted to their care such gifts as insight into the soul, knowledge of the self, zeal for souls, a desire for continual perfection, and wisdom in how to help souls to advance in holiness. Priests who have a holy angel from the choir of Powers assisting them bear many good fruits for God, and do not wane in their joy for helping souls to be cleansed; they are particularly gifted confessors. In serving as catechists, we can pray for our priests, and model reverence for the sacramental priesthood to students, asking that God would bless our priests, who are our teachers in the way of holiness, too. We can imitate the choir of Powers by helping students to live out the common priesthood we are all called to by virtue of our Holy Baptism, in guiding them to live out their baptismal promises, to pray to grow in the contrary virtues (the opposites of the seven deadly sins), so as not to fall into sin. Likewise, we can help students to grow in self-knowledge, emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, so as to open their hearts to learning their identity in God, who God called them to be, so that they may fulfill their unique vocation to be like Our Lady and Our Lord, drawing other souls to the Hearts of Jesus and Mother Mary.

The fifth choir of angels we ascend to is that of the Virtues. These holy angels have power over nature, commanding the sun and other heavenly bodies. They oversee not only the natural world, but guide us to transcend our human nature, our sinful inclinations as human beings, so that we may attain the higher levels of holiness God calls us to. The virtues help people to grow in virtue, aiding them in making sacrifices to offer to God. They help souls with interior and exterior mortification, guiding them in the way of penance and humility, in order to grow in love for God. As catechists, we can imitate the Virtues in praying to always grow in virtue, that we may model virtuous living to students, and help them to grow holier. In our self-gift, our acts of humble love for God, we can teach students about the joy and meaning associated with giving to others, sharing our treasures, talents, and time to honor God.

On the sixth step we ascend on our ladder to Heaven, we meet the sixth choir, the Dominions. These holy angels befriend teachers in a special way, guiding instructors in institutes of higher learning, missionaries, and all those who lead souls in their spiritual development. They protect souls from despair, bringing

joy and hope. Members of the choir of Dominions love God and His will, striving to fulfill it perfectly by helping those who support others in doing what God calls them to do. The Dominions aid in the work of conversion of souls. For our ministries as catechists, they are particularly helpful intercessors. We can honor them by calling upon them often, and imitating them in leading souls to hope in Christ, encouraging them to never give up, but to keep striving towards holiness. In our ministries to students, we can place ourselves in the hands of the Dominions as their students, practicing their devotion to God by praying to do His will, to help students on the path to discovering His will for them, and to support the vocations of our students given to them by Our Lord, rejoicing in the opportunity to lead students to growth in spiritual knowledge, one step at a time.

The seventh choir of holy angels we meet is that of the Thrones. Members of the choir of Thrones are deeply humble. They radiate peace, bringing much consolation. The Thrones provide a seat of rest for God, for all who labor for Him. These holy angels bring serenity to the soul, helping us to discern disorder caused by sin within our souls, so that it may be rooted out, and tranquility may be restored to us. We may imitate these holy angels in serving God with peace, which comes from having joy in all situations, placing our hope and trust in God, so that we may see His Providence at all times, not resorting to sin for fulfillment, but maintaining the perfect peace that He brings. We may provide support and security for those whom we serve, being sources of consolation by showing kindness and mercy. Like the Thrones, we may be seats of wisdom, a wisdom that comes from the heart, the seat of love, so that we may instill a love for learning about God in our students, helping them to realize the peace that comes from knowing and loving Our Lord, from resting in His Heart, in the knowledge of His love for us, with confidence. As we humbly receive the gifts that God brings, we may humbly offer them back to Him, crediting His grace for the accomplishment of the works we do, demonstrating to students what it means to give glory to Our Lord.

Almost there! We have reached the eighth choir of holy angels, the Cherubim. Renowned for their wisdom and knowledge, the Cherubim are advisors to God. They are sources of counsel for us, too, guiding us to share knowledge of the Faith to bless our students, as we come to understand from them what it means to fully honor God the Father. These holy angels help us to overcome doubts that stand in the way of total faith, and to transcend scrupulous tendencies through true knowledge of God that helps us to discern how to follow God with a balanced spirit that exalts His transcendence, while still acknowledging His

Presence within us, treating ourselves with patience and kindness. We extend this grace to others, patiently helping our students to persevere in their studies, and to give their best to God, nurturing in them a self-gentleness that allows them to see God's Heart of love and mercy, His tenderness for them, shining through. At this stage, we aim to support students as they are challenged to grow in a deeper wisdom, to ascend to greater faith, and having built its foundations. We strive to help them synthesize what they have learned, to culminate all of the skills and knowledge they have honed in glorification of God.

At the summit! The ninth choir of holy angels, the Seraphim, greet us with great love, for this is their core attribute. They surround God, constantly in His light. God is love, so they reflect back His love perpetually. "Seraphim" means "burning ones." The seraphim are consumed by the holy fire of their love for God. From the seraphim, we learn that our ultimate vocation is to love. Each step in life is to bring us towards the deepest possible love for God, an all-consuming charity that spreads its flames into our care for others. Our goal is to imitate the seraphim in pouring our love for God into all that we do, and igniting the spark of love for God all the more brightly and steadfastly in the souls of the people we serve. We are to keep striving towards a greater love of God, in ourselves personally, and all those around us, so that we may be brought together to Heaven to love God eternally.

Contemplating all nine of the choirs of angels, we see them as so many jewels in the crown of Christ the King, treasured in the crown of Our Lady, Queen of Angels as well. This year, we pray to grow more like one of the choirs of holy angels each month, that we may come to reveal God's love more fully to others by imitating their attributes. As we come to treasure the holy angels more, we can come to better treasure our students, and all creations of God, as His treasures, too, asking the holy angels to lead us closer to Him as one family. Holy angels are messengers, so as we practice and grow in virtuous attributes associated with each choir of holy angels, we spread the message of God's goodness, helping our students to practice and grow in virtues, too, that they may reflect the light of the holy angels shining for God's glory in Heaven.

Month	Angelic Choir and their Attribute(s) to Imitate
September 2025, Choir 1: Angels	Care/Gentleness
October 2025, Choir 2: Archangels	Loyalty, Faithfulness
November 2025, Choir 3: Principalities	Perseverance in Prayer, Purity of Intention
December 2025, Choir 4: Powers	Strength, Confidence in God/Trust
January 2026, Choir 5: Virtues	Generosity
February 2026, Choir 6: Dominions	Knowledge/Counsel, Hope
March 2026, Choir 7: Thrones	Humility, Peace
April 2026, Choir 8: Cherubim	Wisdom
May 2026, Choir 9: Seraphim	Love

## **Religious Education Year 2025-26 Program Goals**

### **What are our shared goals this year?**

1. Promote a culture of prayer: prayer is care!
  - Every creative challenge is an opportunity. We ask God to inspire us to use our gifts to act in accordance with His will, praying that the Holy Spirit will guide us to be problem-solvers faithful to God in living out His Commandments to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and to love Him with all our hearts, minds, and souls.
  - For every intention, identify a saint and angel who can assist us. We draw on our heavenly as well as our earthly networks, one extensive circle of communication! As a family of friends in Christ, we call on our saintly and angelic intercessors to inspire us in imitating their virtues, modeling Christlike words and actions to reflect His light.
  - Share personal intentions, and pray for each other's intentions
2. Strengthen bridges from each sacrament to the next, across grade/age levels
  - Prepare the hearts of students and their families to respond to grace from God with love and reverence
3. Open ourselves to transformation from Christ inwardly to make a difference outwardly
4. Imitate the holy angels in devoted, loving service to God and others
5. Connect generations through traditions that center Christ in our lives
6. Accompany each other in spiritual growth
  - Recognize that our individual relationships with God are in the context of community, with all of our friendships flowing from our friendship with God, the source of all love

### **How will we achieve these goals through special program initiatives this year?**

- Leveraging digital communications, from email to social media
  - We are utilizing our parish Facebook page as an additional channel of communication. Updates about special events or initiatives in the religious education program will be posted on our account to further engage members of our parish family who are active on social media.
- Engaging the senses to engage the minds, hearts, and souls of students and families in glorifying God
  - Visio divina

- To evangelize, we will be creative in using all mediums to educate, and appeal to a variety of learning styles, including visual and auditory learners. In our print and digital communications, we center visuals/graphics that convey the rich signs, symbols, and traditions of our Church, all of which point to God as the Source of all goodness, truth, and beauty.
- We also provide links to technologies/audiovisual resources (i.e. songs, videos) that allow for people of all needs/abilities and learning styles to grow spiritually, and be formed to hear God speaking into their hearts.
- Visio divina involves looking at sacred art and reflecting on it. Our monthly home activities involve visio divina as a spiritual practice, and our in-person class activities bring it to life in an elevated form, as we use arts-based instruction to communicate truths about our Faith, most especially, the love of God.
- We encourage students to creatively express their unique selves by using their God-given talents as they become who God made them to be. We treat each human as a masterpiece created by God, pooling our own talents to encourage others to grow in theirs.
- Being nourished by Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition: the word of God and the Word of God
  - Through such activities as Bible scavenger hunts, we will invite students and families into deeper relationships with God as they listen for His voice, and receive what He is speaking into their hearts. Through prayer and lectio divina, meditation on spiritual readings, we will prepare ourselves to grow in contemplative practices so that we may better bring the good news of God into the world through our actions.
  - Absorbing God's word into our hearts, we will lift our minds and souls to praising Him. We will prepare students to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion by encouraging regular sacramental Confession, and emphasizing what it means to be in a state of grace, so that we may more fully receive the graces God extends to us in sacraments such as the Holy Eucharist, in which we encounter Christ, the Word made flesh.

- Emphasizing traditional devotions, tangible signs of our faith, and concrete actions we can take to live out our beliefs
  - Devotion to Jesus Christ, our Savior: We will inspire students and families to help turn their minds, hearts, and souls more closely to Christ, Who is King of Heaven and Earth, the Second Person of the Trinity, fully man and fully God.
    - Holy Mass, Holy Communion, and the Eucharistic Presence of Christ: To assist students in opening themselves to the greatest possible graces, we will prepare them to worthily receive Holy Communion. In so doing, we will instruct them in making a good Confession, emphasizing the importance of regular Confession, so that Holy Communion may be received regularly as well. We will devote focused time and attention to instilling a sense of wonder for the sacredness of the Holy Mass, as a reflection of God's beauty, truth, and goodness, and therefore, as a foretaste of life in Heaven with Him. Promoting the Holy Mass as the ultimate means to knowing Christ, serving as a member of His Mystical Body, and sanctifying ourselves, we will inspire students to ensure they are in the right disposition, a state of grace, to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. Affirming students in the goal to become holier and receive a fuller outpouring of God's graces through the sacraments, we will help students to progress in their spiritual lives, as God will guide us to help students make their goal a reality. As they receive special graces, they will be even further prepared to continue maturing spiritually.
    - Eucharistic Adoration: To foster vocations, we will assist students in vocational discernment, praying in a special way for vocations. Many vocations are discovered as a result in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament at Eucharistic Adoration. We will deepen devotion to Jesus' Presence in the Holy Eucharist by encouraging Eucharistic Adoration as a way of coming to better know Christ, engaging families in praying together in visits to the Blessed Sacrament not only when exposed in the monstrance, but when in the tabernacle, that we may become increasingly aware of Christ's constant Presence among us, the Word made Flesh nourishing our souls. This is another manner of promoting contemplation, taking refuge

from the world in Our Lord's Sacred Heart, which is before us in the Holy Eucharist, His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. In Adoration, students will further learn to turn to prayer in making all of their decisions in life, which will help them to discover their identities in Our Blessed Lord, and discern how He is calling them to serve Him. As the source and summit of our Catholic life, the Holy Eucharist will be honored as the means to our salvation in Christ. In particular, students preparing for their First Holy Communion will fulfill the Offices of the Sacred Heart in union with the holy angels and their patroness, St. Therese of Lisieux, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament aimed at cultivating virtues in their souls, so that in the nine months leading up to their First Holy Communion, they may grow in friendship with Our Lord, nurtured by Our Lady, thereby being readied to welcome the Bread of the Angels into the gardens of their hearts.

- Spiritual communion: We will pay homage to St. Alphonsus Liguori, a devotee of Our Lady, the Queen of Saints like himself, and the Queen of Angels like those whom he imitated, by encouraging students and families to say prayers of spiritual communion, namely, those calling our holy guardian angels to be at the church by the tabernacle when we cannot be physically present there. While spiritual communion does not replace sacramental Communion, it prepares the heart to more lovingly receive sacramental Communion when the time comes. For busy families who long to receive Jesus daily, we will promote spiritual communion as a means of absorbing the love of Christ into their hearts each day. This will assist in readying them for reverent reception of Holy Communion while fulfilling their Sunday Holy Mass obligation. Spiritual communion prayers will be a special highlight particularly within our First Holy Communion preparation program, as a way of centering Christ in the hearts, minds, and souls of children, so that when the Holy Mass of First Holy Communion transpires, they will be fully prepared to invite Christ into their hearts on a deeper level.

- Stations:
  - of the Holy Eucharist
  - of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
  - of the Holy Cross
  - of the Resurrection of Our Lord
    - All of these stational journeys through the life of Christ will assist us in accompanying students and families in contemplation and action. In praying these Stations, we will meditate on Christ's holiness, and discern how to imitate in our own lives. Special emphases on the Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart will contextualize the Stations of the Cross and the Stations of the Resurrection. They will help us to see how Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection open us to new life, with the fruits of His Sacrifice offered for our salvation helping us to attain Heaven. In better loving Christ through devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Eucharist, we are prepared to die to sin, and accept eternal life with Christ. As we more closely imitate Christ, we purify our souls for life with God in Heaven, opening our hearts to love God the Father like the Son, and to be healed by the love of the Son through reception of the Holy Eucharist.
- Christ the King
  - Enthronement: To center Christ as King of our hearts, we will promote the practice of enthronement of the Sacred Heart, which involves placing a blessed image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (a holy picture or statue) at the center of a home or parish.
- Sacred Heart
  - First Friday: We will draw students and families deeper into the Sacred Heart by teaching about the love therein. We will outline what it means to live out devotion to the Sacred Heart, illuminating the concepts of reparation and adoration. To help increase participation in devotion

to the Sacred Heart, we will teach about honoring Jesus' call to attend Holy Mass/Confession and say prayers of reparation on the first Friday of every month.

○ Devotion to Mother Mary

- Total consecration to Jesus through Mary: In bringing students and families nearer to Jesus, we will direct them to Mother Mary, the channel of grace through which one is brought to the Son. We will walk students and families through the process of consecration, of giving oneself in service to God.
- The Immaculate Heart: We cannot honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus without honoring the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as the Two Hearts are so full of love for God and each other, as to be closely interlinked. To honor the Immaculate Heart, we will practice the virtues that jewel Our Lady's Heart, striving to live in imitation of her. We will serve in our catechetical ministries with love, gentleness, patience, compassion, and kindness, just as Our Lady serves God. Devotion to the Immaculate Heart will be deepened through using devotional chaplets to pray for Our Lady's intercession; special lessons in our religious education classes; and monthly activities/supplementary learning materials. In our prayers and actions we offer, we go to the Heart of Our Lady, approaching her humbly in order to draw closer to Christ.
  - First Saturday: We will further promote First Saturday devotions as a means of making reparations to the Immaculate Heart through our Children of Mary Sodality, coming together as a family of her spiritual children to honor her. We encourage students and families to venerate Our Lady by attending Confession and Holy Mass on the first Saturday of every month; saying special prayers in honor of Our Lady; praying the Holy Rosary; and meditating on the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary with Our Lady in mind. In teaching students the prayers of the Holy Rosary, and instilling a deeper appreciation for the Holy Mass in our lessons, we will encourage practice of the First Saturday devotion.

- Virtues of Mary: We will encourage students to imitate the virtues of Mother Mary, and those of the choirs of holy angels, especially in the context of the Holy Mass. To teach reverent behaviors, we will look to Our Lady and the holy angels as our models. As catechists, we will contemplate the life of Mary, considering its applications for our role as catechist, and how the holy angels venerated her, that we may teach our students by example in reverencing Jesus and Mother Mary as the holy angels do. We will also look to saints who modeled their lives after Mother Mary, and devoted themselves more deeply to her through friendship with the holy angels, as further examples of putting Marian virtues into action, especially as educators teaching holiness.
- The holy scapular: We will continue to introduce students and families to sacramentals such as the scapular to encourage them to clothe themselves in virtue, and embrace signs of faith that will serve as reminders to honor God.
  - Investiture in the brown scapular will be offered to First Communicants as a continued revival of the past tradition. We entrust our students and families to the patronage of Our Lady, aiming to help students deepen their own faith, so that they may fully trust in the goodness of God.
  - Sacramentals like the holy scapular will be used to empower students to choose the path of Jesus and Mary, the path of salvation, as we impart knowledge of the scapular promise: Our Lady's promise to protect those who wear the scapular.
  - To inspire students to embrace living life within a community of faithful, the Mystical Body of Christ, whether as laypeople or as consecrated religious, we will instruct them in the charisms of religious orders, highlighting their use of sacramentals such as holy scapulars in their practice of evangelical counsels and virtues.
- The Holy Rosary: The holy scapular and the Holy Rosary are the means by which the Immaculate Heart will triumph, as

Our Lady has stated. Keeping in mind our ultimate goal of leading souls to Heaven, we will frequently center insights about the Holy Rosary into our religious education home activities and class lessons, connecting parish events involving recitation of the Holy Rosary to our program. Teaching the Holy Rosary will assist us in fulfilling our catechist standard to draw Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition together in our lessons, as the scriptural Rosary makes use of verses from the Bible for meditation, which link to the sacred mysteries being prayed on each decade of beads.

- Devotional chaplets honoring Our Lady: devotional chaplets do not replace the Holy Rosary, but supplement them. They assist us in contemplating specific sacred mysteries, and in developing special devotions that uniquely speak to our experiences, interests, goals, and talents, such as devotion to the Divine Child/Infant of Prague. We will introduce various devotional chaplets and prayers to students and families throughout the year. Using devotional chaplets is a tangible way to teach students and families practical applications for living out their beliefs, according to what God is calling them to do. These will assist us in promoting a culture of prayer, as devotional chaplets may be used throughout the day, at home or while traveling.
- Devotion to the saints: The Church is referred to as the “Mother of Saints.” Naturally, then, Our Lady, who is Mother of the Church (the Mother of all mothers, including Mother Church!), is Queen of All Saints, and Queen of the Holy Angels, our patroness for this year, who guided souls to be sainted in Heaven through teaching them angelic virtue. Through the intercession of Our Lady, new saints are made to join the holy angels in Heaven, for Our Lady is the greatest of the saints. It is through Our Lady that Christ was born, and because He was born, He could give His life for our salvation. Christ’s Sacrifice is what enables people to become saints in the first place. Our Lady leads us closer to Him, so as His Mother, she occupies a special place in salvation history, helping to bring people to Heaven. She inspires angelic kindness in human beings whose lives are themselves inspirations to others who are encouraged to

strive to become saints reflecting the heavenly love of the holy angels. As catechists, we look to Our Lady as our model in forming future saints, by becoming saintly ourselves. This is possible through imitating her virtues, her holy qualities that mirror those of Christ. Devotion to the saints and holy angels deepens devotion to Our Lady and Our Lord. In learning about the lives of the saints, and the holy angels who guided them to sainthood, students can learn how to practice virtue every day, relating the earthly lives of human saints to their own lives.

- Special feast day celebrations: to encourage Marian devotion, we will study the saints in relation to her, considering how they honored Mother Mary, imitating her virtues. In celebrating the saints' feast days each month, we will teach that holiness brings joy, that everything coming from God is good, and worthy of celebration. We will underscore that to be a saint means being guided by the Queen of All Saints, the Mother who nurtures our saintly qualities, helping them to grow. Below is a sampling of the saints we will honor with special celebrations and themed activities at each class:
  - St. Michael the Archangel (September)
  - St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (October)
  - All Saints' Day (November)
  - St. Catherine of Alexandria (November)
  - St. Nicholas (December)
  - Sts. Balthasar, Caspar, and Melchior (January)
  - St. Joseph (March)
  - St. Patrick (March)
- Expanded religious education enrichment opportunities: we will continue to offer original materials unique to our program, all updated for the new year, with all of its themes specific to our goals this year. Several new materials will also be provided in accordance with fresh program initiatives we have developed. In Christ, all things are ever-ancient, ever-new. That being said, we will remain rooted in Him, retaining evergreen content that speaks to unchanging truths, but will present these concepts in creative ways that will engage students and families as their minds are illuminated with new understandings of Christ. We are always open to new ideas designed to increase participation in parish life, so more initiatives will be

developed and added as the year progresses, especially in terms of event programming to be offered.

- Newsletters: The newsletters we have provided primarily online will now be integrated into our students' activity books, in addition to being posted on our website. Each monthly newsletter will correlate with the theme for the month. Every newsletter will include a prayer and reflection connecting to the Litany title, devotion, and saint we will be focusing on during the month, providing insight into how we may honor Jesus and Mother Mary with the spirit in which the holy angels do, as we reflect on how the devotional theme of the month illuminates another heavenly treasure of the holy angels. Digital enrichment notes emailed via Flocknote will be aimed at the whole parish, expanding upon our religious education newsletters for families. Newsletters will assist in keeping families abreast of upcoming events in the parish and diocese. We aim to offer an even stronger visual component in including photos from our events, further communicating that we make our home as faithful followers of Christ in the Church, all of us being needed and welcome here, with Him.
- Activity boxes: For further spiritual engagement, boxes with hands-on learning materials will be provided to students. In 2023-24, hands-on learning materials such as original laminated vocabulary and saint matching cards, prayer and sacrament sequencing cards, and puzzles were introduced at religious education classes. These materials were provided to students in boxes to be taken home and kept for continued practice on religious education skills in the 2024-25 academic year. Themed boxes accorded with themed bonus activity books that will be offered for purchase. Activity books with core content for each month of the religious education year will continue to be provided for all. Special activity boxes specific to sacrament preparation will be offered to students making their First Holy Communion, who will have St. Therese as their patroness, learning angelic kindness through her by using sacrifice beads (good deed beads) to offer gifts and prayers to God each day as they prepare for their First Holy Communion, consecration to Jesus through Mary, and consecration to the holy angels. These boxes will encourage more frequent practice of skills being learned in religious

education classes, and will appeal to a variety of learning styles, especially for students who are tactile learners.

- Activity books to supplement core home-learning activities: As previously stated, original bonus activity books to supplement home learning will be offered to students and families for purchase. A compendium of collected prayers and guides to practicing Catholic devotions is available for all learners, adults and children. Lesson books about the parts of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, and Catholic devotions around the world are forthcoming. These activity books will allow students and families to focus their learning on key topics, according to needs and interests, to delve deeper into thematic material introduced in the core yearly learning books.
  - Sacrament preparation books: As in past years, guides to preparing for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation will be provided to candidates, providing all of the materials they need to imitate the holy angels in receiving the Presence of Our Lord with great love in their hearts. This year's First Holy Communion book is a guide to receiving the Child Jesus in the Holy Eucharist with the love that St. Therese, the Little Flower, did. Students will reflect on her angelic sweetness, which was deepened through her relationship with Christ, the Bread of the Angels, and on how they may adore Jesus wholeheartedly with the holy saints and angels. Students will use a First Holy Communion preparation program similar to what St. Therese's sister, Pauline, designed for her, working on growing in, and applying, a different virtue each month, so as to adorn their hearts with gems, making their souls gardens in which Jesus, the True Flower, may come to dwell. Through their prayers and presents of love to honor Jesus' Presence, our First Communicants will be prepared to consecrate themselves to their holy guardian angels, as well as to Our Lady of Victories, the patroness who prepared St. Therese for First Holy Communion, healing her heart and cleansing it to receive Our Lord with perfect love. Our Confirmation students will similarly work on growing in the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit, applying themselves to producing good fruits for Christ, that these fruits may be harvested at Confirmation, and they may come to receive many

graces from the True Vine, in union with the holy angels who are always attached to Him. Our catechists will nurture the growth of each student, each little flower in God's garden, through serving students with the spirit of love for God that Sts. Zelie and Louis Martin had, and teaching them with the creativity and joy that Pauline Martin embodied. Just as St. Zelie consecrated each of her children to Our Lady, taught them to celebrate our Faith by decorating Marian altars and praying with chaplets, and modeled strong faith in Christ, a Marian sense of strength in remaining by the Cross, gathering flowers at its foot to offer to Our Lord in consolation, our catechists will practice and teach devotion to Our Lady. They may consecrate themselves to Our Lady, their holy guardian angel, and entrust their students to the Immaculate Heart, praying for them to remain close to Jesus and Mother Mary always, through the intercession of their holy guardian angel. Catechists will teach students to offer the treasures of their hearts like flowers to place on altars for Our Lady, that she may pass them on to Our Lord, and return to each soul the graces that they need to remain connected to Our Lord, as though by a garland of roses, to keep them rooted in Him even while near the Cross. Because the student often becomes the teacher, St. Therese would share the wisdom her sister, Pauline, imparted to her, in her role as the mistress of novices at her Carmel ("Carmel" means "God's garden," and in this case, refers to the convent in Lisieux, France, where St. Therese lived), counseling other young women to lead them closer to Christ, and equip them to fulfill their vocations with the greatest possible love. Comparably, we pray to empower our students to share the knowledge of their Faith, and devotion to Our Lord, that all may come to treasure the Faith, the pearl of great price that has immeasurable value, just as we are precious to Our Lord.

- Devotional materials: To achieve our goal of spreading Marian devotion, particularly through the Holy Rosary, we will provide rosaries and other devotional chaplets to students and families to encourage regular practice of essential prayers. We seek to inspire students and families to connect more deeply with God and each

other by taking time for contemplation and prayer, thereby disconnecting from the busyness of the world for a time. Rosaries and chaplets will assist in promoting balance, encouraging the cultivation of Fruits of the Holy Spirit, including peace, joy, and patience. Being like Our Lady means being reflective, embracing the interior life, which chaplet prayers are designed to promote. Many rosaries and chaplets provided to students will be handmade to teach children that these sacramentals are accessible to everyone, and can be created as a further sign of devotion to Our Lady. Children will also have the opportunity to create their own chaplets as they learn about the rich treasury of chaplet devotions in our Church. Since young children are sensorimotor learners, tangible devotional materials will appeal to their senses, helping them to retain knowledge through tactile application of skills learned. This will promote healthy development in providing students with a rest from digital technology. In the 2025-26 academic year, we will offer guardian angel chaplets to our students so that they may focus on growing closer to their holy guardian angel, imitating their virtues in order to remain close to Our Lord, the Bread of the Angels and Our Lady, Queen of the Angels.

- Prayer partner initiative: In keeping with our goal to join together as one parish family to support each other in learning about God, we will continue our prayer partner initiative that began in the 2023-24 religious education year. Prayer cards with the names of First Communicants and Confirmation candidates in our 2026 classes will be provided in file folders on bulletin boards in the church vestibule for members of our parish to collect, and use in praying for our students making sacraments. We partner in prayer, keeping the intentions of our students in our hearts, as we spiritually befriend them, journeying with them in spirit as they prepare to draw closer to Jesus in the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Graces from this initiative will flow both ways: those who receive prayers from their “prayer buddies” will be blessed as they ready their hearts to make the sacraments, and those who pray for our students will receive God’s grace for their act of charity. From love, the grace of God flows. Besides prayers for students, we will continue to extend the prayer partner initiative to our priests and catechists, for as teachers, we are eternal students equipped by

prayers, which support our journey in faith, that we may treasure it all the more, and share our learnings with others.

- Class prayer intentions: At each class this year, a designated space will continue to be provided for students and families to write down their prayer intentions. These intentions will be prayed for by the DRE during the following month, after which new intentions will be accepted for another cycle of prayer. Catechists are also invited to participate in private prayer for special intentions. This initiative supports our goal of enfolding our parish family in the love of God through prayer, which knits everyone together in friendship with Christ, and models an active prayer life. It communicates to students that they are cared for and loved by God, which can instill a greater confidence in them as they develop the virtues of faith and hope in God.
- Summer learning opportunities: As we strive to achieve our goal of building strong bridges through the years between sacraments, we will emphasize that religious education is continuous, inviting students and families to make meaning from their summer experiences by engaging with our original materials designed for summer learning, in between our religious education year classes. Themed activity books, activity boxes, and devotional items have been offered for purchase to students and members of our parish family. We support each other in continuing our learning journey year-round, so as to also encourage continued participation in parish life throughout the year. In Christ, there are unending cycles: the Church year repeats, allowing us to enter into the sacred mysteries with Him again and again, growing more deeply in our love for Christ. Therefore, we will correlate our religious education year ever more closely with the Church year, offering families summer learning materials that emphasize the beautiful traditional devotions and celebrations of holy days given to us by Mother Church in the summer months. In persisting in their education over the summer, students will be more likely to retain material, being better prepared for the coming year.
- Catechist formation: A religious education program and its students are only as strong as their catechists. We invest in our catechists, because we invest in the future. Catechists are instrumental in shaping the hearts, minds, and souls of future generations. Their

inspiring contributions to our program are greatly valued. Last year, as part of a learning series for catechists, we pondered in our hearts the virtues of Mother Mary and the saints who imitated her in their ministries to nurture and educate others. This year, we will expand upon these topics by focusing on virtues specific to catechists according to St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, and learning about how the holy angels embodied these qualities, that we, too, may imitate them in our ministries. The more that we discover about the joys of our Faith, the more that we have to share with our students as catechists. This spirit of possibility and openness to the wisdom of Jesus and Mary will guide us in our catechist formation initiative this year, when we will encourage contemplation through catechist workshops that will serve as mini-retreats, opportunities to reflect. Through reflection, we prepare to take targeted action that will help us to achieve our goals. We discern how best to be the best we can be!

### **Which affirmations will guide us?**

- **Religious education is for everyone.** We all need God in our lives to become the best we can be. Learning more about God helps us to know Him more. When we know Him more, we can love Him more. God gives us all of the years of our life to teach us. Every experience we have is provided to sanctify us, to help us become holier. Putting ourselves on the path to Heaven means keeping our minds alert to God's Presence, which, in turn, primes our hearts to recognize and welcome God. Religious education empowers us to know and share the truth for God's glory, as it leads us to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is never too late or too early to begin learning about the One Who created us, loves us, and calls us to be with Him!
- **Faith formation is lifelong.** God made each of us with a conscience. This is our instinctive knowledge of what is right. In our hearts, we yearn for God. We sense His Presence. Faith formation helps us to continue discerning God's will in our lives. God is infinite: there is no limit to His love, which goes on forever, so there is always something more we can learn about Him! Being formed in our faith means that we are prepared for Heaven, prepared to be with God in eternal life by centering Him in our earthly lives. We are molded more closely into the image and likeness of God, equipped to act on what He is calling us to do, and to follow His Commandments. If religious education shapes our minds through

catechesis, faith formation, more broadly, enables us to use our education at every stage of development. No matter our age or stage, there is always a need to know God, and to come together as friends in Christ to understand how to navigate changes in ways that honor God. He is always preparing us to something new, something more, for Him, which is to our benefit.

- **Our church is our spiritual home, our home away from home.** At Holy Mass, we all gather together in prayer, remembering our earthly and heavenly friends. Jesus' Sacrifice unites souls in the universal Church: the Church on Earth (Church Militant), Purgatory (Church Suffering), and Heaven (Church Triumphant). We are rooted in Christ, our foundation, Who leads us to Heaven, our true home, through the Holy Eucharist we receive at Holy Mass. In our religious education classes this year, we will continue to emphasize the connection between the domestic Church and the universal Church.
  - We encourage families to learn and grow together by planting seeds of faith at home (the domestic Church). In our parish, we nurture these seeds through religious education. The activities provided to families are designed to bring Christ more deeply into the home, so that when we leave the home to go out into the world, we bring Christ with us, inspiring others to welcome Him into their hearts and homes as well. To communicate to students and families that the parish is our home away from home, we will promote a Christlike spirit of welcome, inviting families to learn and grow with us as our friends in Christ. We will support each other as one parish family, emphasizing that we journey closer to God together, as God designed us to be social beings, willing that we worship together to praise Him. Through engaging with others, we build up the Church, as we use our voices to share the good news of God's love, just as He intended.
  - At each class this year, we will include a "home shrine," a small altar on which we will place sacramentals that convey the beauty of each liturgical season, and Christ's Presence within it. Topped with a cloth in the color of the liturgical season, the altar will be decorated to give glory to God with symbols of His love and mercy: candles, crucifixes, rosaries, flowers, holy water, holy pictures and statues of Jesus, Mary, and the saints, along with other devotional items appropriate to the season, such as manglers and Advent wreaths. Enthroning Christ at the center of every class, we will make our

home in Christ's Sacred Heart, immersing ourselves in His loving Presence, which we can reflect to all through kindness and compassion.

- As many lessons as possible will take place in the church itself to acclimate students and families to this sacred space, encouraging them to continue returning, and entrusting themselves to the loving Presence of God. Lessons delivered in the parish hall will connect to the church, pointing back to Christ at the center.

*"He said to them, 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.' " (Mark 16: 15)*

## The Meaning of Catechesis and Evangelization

Evangelization and catechesis are often used as interchangeable terms, when, in fact, they are two different modes of teaching, both needed to achieve the mission of saving souls.

When we meet others seeking Christ, we evangelize to build the foundation needed to know Christ. To evangelize is to help another person develop a relationship with Christ. Before catechesis may be completed, this step is needed.

The very word “evangelize” means, in essence, to share the “good news,” just as the holy angels share messages from God, that people in God’s created world may learn of His love, discovering that the thoughts of Our Lord’s Heart are always with us, as He pours out the love in His Heart to nourish us, that we may never hunger, or experience spiritual famine. Evangelization begins by modeling a life of faith, bearing witness to the good news of God not only in word, but in deed. We tell the story of God’s transformative goodness and love through our own lives, embodying His goodness and love through actions that invite others to know the Source of our joy, the One who inspires our love.

In the ways we embody angelic kindness through our actions, showing God’s mercy to others, we encourage them to go directly to His Heart for sustenance, that in receiving the Eucharistic Heart of Christ, they may receive the Bread of the Angels, their means to heavenly glory. To evangelize is to sing an unending song of thanksgiving and praise to God, just as Our Lord began His Passion by singing a song of gratitude to the Father with the apostles. We praise the Heart of Jesus for His love when we sing with love for Him, praising all that He does in the melody of continuous prayer that we weave with our lives, our faith and good works offered for Our Lord.

In all times, we praise God, since He is always working, leading us closer to Heaven, and delighting us with His beauty, truth, and goodness that is reflected in the holy angels, the messengers of His love; we, too, draw souls to God through reflecting His beauty, truth, and goodness as the holy angels do. Saint Gabriel the archangel, the special patron of Our Lady, was sent to strengthen Our Lord during His Passion. In imitating the holy angels, we convey God’s strength to others, helping them to persevere in faith, that they may praise God in all times as well, feeling His loving Presence.

When others are drawn to know God, and open themselves to receiving His love, they are prepared to be formally catechized. In catechesis, we deepen the learning process, helping others to more fully embrace the good news, and apply it in their own lives by gaining a stronger understanding of what the “good news” is.

As we catechize, we teach others about the events of salvation history. We share our Catholic beliefs about the Presence of God in human history from the time of creation.

In thinking of the “good news,” it is natural to think immediately of the good news of Christ’s Resurrection, after having sacrificed Himself for the redemption of humankind. Indeed, this good news is essential to catechesis, as understanding the love of God that compelled Him to give His only Son for us allows us to more deeply love God, and enter into a closer relationship with Him. However, the story of God’s love begins with the Old Testament, continues in the New Testament, and does not end; it lives in us, too, in each of our souls, lovingly made by God.

Catechesis, then, is conveying the teachings of the Church in such a way that those being catechized are inspired to evangelize, too, to share their own messages of how God has worked in their lives, that others may rejoice in the Savior. Good catechists help the students to become teachers, empowering them to witness to God’s saving work within themselves, and to use their gifts to serve Him. A good catechist recognizes that everyone has something special to share, because everyone is made by God in His image, and has dignity. Excellent catechists help others to see God within themselves, and to reflect His goodness in their work, molding future catechists on the road to sainthood, to praising God in glory with the holy angels.

**Our Lady of the Valley Parish Religious Education Program Schedule  
~ Religious Education Year 2025-26 Calendar for Catechists ~**

- ✠ **Catechist Breakfast:** Saturday, August 23, 2025
  - 10:00 a.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Opening Year Holy Mass, Blessing of Catechists, and Welcome Meeting/Family Social:** Thursday, August 26, 2025
  - Holy Mass: 6:00 p.m., church
  - Welcome meeting & family social: ~6:30 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **First Holy Communion Preparation Informational Meeting:** Thursday, August 28, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Confirmation Preparation Informational Meeting:** Thursday, August 28, 2025
  - 7:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 1:** Thursday, September 4, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 2:** Thursday, October 2, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 3:** Thursday, November 6, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✠ **Religious Education Program Catechist Meeting 1:** Thursday, November 20, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish library
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 4:** Thursday, December 4, 2025
  - Holy Mass: 6:00 p.m., church
  - Class: 6:30 p.m., parish hall
    - Snow date: Thursday, December 11, 2025
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 5:** Thursday, January 8, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
    - Snow date: Thursday, January 15, 2026
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 6:** Thursday, February 5, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
    - Snow date: Thursday, February 12, 2026
- ✠ **Confirmation patron saint name and sponsor forms due:** Friday, February 13, 2026
- ✠ **Religious Education Class Session 7:** Thursday, March 5, 2026
  - Holy Mass: 6:00 p.m., church
  - Class: 6:30 p.m., parish hall
    - Snow date: Thursday, March 12, 2026

- ✝ **Religious Education Program Catechist Meeting 2:** Thursday, March 12, 2026
  - 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., parish library
- ✝ **Confirmation Rehearsal:** Friday, March 20, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., church
    - Confirmation service logs and reflections due
- ✝ **Mass of Confirmation:** Tuesday, March 24, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., church
  - 7:00 p.m. reception in parish hall
- ✝ **Religious Education Class Session 8:** Thursday, April 9, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✝ **First Holy Communion Retreat:** Saturday, April 11, 2026
  - ~11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., parish hall: retreat includes pew banner-making and First Confession rehearsal
- ✝ **First Confession for First Holy Communion students:** Thursday, April 16, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., church
- ✝ **First Holy Communion Mass Rehearsal:** Thursday, April 23, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., church
- ✝ **Mass of First Holy Communion:** Saturday, April 25, 2026
  - 11:00 a.m., church
  - 12:00 p.m. reception in parish hall
- ✝ **End-of-Year Celebration:** Thursday, May 7, 2026
  - Mass: 6:00 p.m., church
- ✝ **Religious Education Program Catechist Workshop 1:** Thursday, May 14, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✝ **Religious Education Program Catechist Workshop 2:** Thursday, May 21, 2026
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall
- ✝ **Religious Education Program Catechist Workshop 3:** Thursday, May 28, 2025
  - 6:00 p.m., parish hall

### **2025-26 REY Thematic Calendar**

Guiding our 2022-23 religious education year were seven of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, which served as our monthly themes. Anchoring our 2023-24 religious education year were monthly themes relating to the liturgical year, illuminating the lives of Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph, looking, as a whole, at the life of the Church, which is centered around the Holy Family.

For each month of the 2024-25 religious education year, we reflected on the significance of special titles given to Mother Mary in the Litany of Loreto, considering what these titles reveal about Our Lady. In so doing, we deepened our relationships with Jesus through Mother Mary, coming to a deeper appreciation of who they are, and how they shape our souls with their love. First Holy Communion and Confirmation students further reflected on these titles by viewing them in light of the sacraments, meditating on Jesus' Eucharistic Presence, and the Presence of the Holy Spirit, respectively. Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Cenacle, they learned about how to reverence God like Our Lady, looking to her as patroness and role model. Using special titles for Mary that we learned about, we applied our understanding by calling upon her in prayer, growing in love for Mary by honoring her Holy Name.

Using the Holy Family as our model, we will continue to serve our families in leading by example, expressing God's love as the members of the Holy Family did. Each month, we will learn about saints who lived with angelic kindness, along with holy angels who reflect the monthly themes, further demonstrating how to love Jesus like Mary through all of life's seasons. Spotlight prayers, saints, works of mercy, Scripture verses/passages will be used to illuminate thematic lessons we are teaching each month. In learning from the lives of the saints and holy angels, we will practice applying their virtues, ultimately led by the Queen of the Angels in our journey to better know and love God.

Our 2025-26 monthly themes will honor Our Lord, the Bread of Angels, through one of the invocations from the Litany of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and invocations of a patron saint who honors the Eucharistic Heart of Our Lord, the Bread of the Angels, and Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, in a special way. We will reflect on these invocations, offering them from our hearts to God, and will treasure them deep within our souls like Our Lady. In our prayers, we ask that the Holy Spirit and the holy angels would inspire us to embody deep devotion to Our Lord, as expressed through these special titles for Him, and to inspire

devotion to Him in the hearts of others. We pray to be spiritually sustained by the Bread of Angels, and to imitate the angelic love of Christ that we receive in the Holy Eucharist, so that as we are transformed from within, we may help to effect the spiritual transformation of our neighbors. In a special way, we will honor Our Lady as the Mother of the Holy Eucharist who brings us to sustenance in her Son, and is surrounded by the holy angels who adore the Blessed Sacrament dwelling with her.

**2025-2026 REY Thematic Calendar: A Year with Our Lady, Queen of the Angels and Our Lord, the Bread of the Angels**

Patroness for 2025-26: Our Lady, Queen of Angels

<b>Month</b>	<b>Title for Jesus: Litany of the Most Blessed Sacrament</b>
September 2025	Sacred Host, gift and glory of the priesthood
October 2025	Jesus, really, truly and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament
November 2025	Sacred Host, spiritual food
December 2025	Sacred Host, adored by countless angels
January 2026	Sacred Host, sign and cause of the unity of the Church
February 2026	Sacred Host, Sacrament of love
March 2026	Jesus, with us always
April 2026	Jesus, Bread of Life
May 2026	Sacred Host, in which the soul is filled with grace

Monthly Themes and their Patron Saints: Friends of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels and Our Lord, the Bread of the Angels

<b>Month and Year</b>	<b>Monthly Patrons: Sainly Friends of Our Lord and Our Lady</b>	<b>Special Feast Day Remembrances Being Celebrated</b>
September 2025	St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) (Sept. 23)	Nativity of Our Lady (Sept. 8)

	Subpatron: St. Wenceslaus (Sept. 28)	Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept. 14)
	Subpatron: St. Michael the Archangel (Sept. 29)	Feast of the Archangels (Sept. 29)
October 2025	St. Raphael the Archangel (Oct. 24)	Feast of Christ the King (Oct. 26, 2025)
November 2025	St. Cecilia (Nov. 22)	All Saints' Day (Nov. 1)
	Subpatron: St. Catherine of Alexandria (Nov. 25)	Feast of the Miraculous Medal (Nov. 27)
	Subpatron: St. Gertrude (Nov. 16)	
December 2025	St. Stephen (Dec. 26)	Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8)
	Subpatron: St. John the Beloved Apostle (Dec. 27)	Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12)
	Subpatron: St. David the King (Dec. 29)	Christmas (Dec. 25)
January 2026	St. Francis de Sales (Jan. 29)	Feast of Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1)
	Subpatron: St. Andre Bessette (Jan. 6)	Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6)
	Subpatron: St. Agnes of Rome (Jan. 21)	Feast of Our Lady of Peace (Jan. 24)
February 2026	St. Dorothy (Feb. 6)	Candlemas/Presentation of Our Lord (Feb. 2)
	Subpatron: St. Catherine de Ricci (Feb. 13)	Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18, 2026)
March 2026	St. Gabriel the Archangel (Mar. 24)	Annunciation of Our Lady (Mar. 25)
	Subpatrons: St. Frances of Rome and St. Catherine of Bologna (Mar. 9)	

April 2026	St. Mark (Apr. 25)	Holy Thursday (Apr. 2, 2026)
		Good Friday (Apr. 3, 2026)
	Subpatron: St. Gemma (Apr. 11)	Holy Saturday (Apr. 4, 2026)
		Easter Sunday (Apr. 5, 2026)
May 2026	St. Philip Neri (May 26)	Pentecost Sunday (May 24, 2026)
	Subpatron: St. Isidore the Farmer (May 15)	

**Spring 2026 Catechist Workshop Theme: St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and the Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher**

<b>Date of Workshop</b>	<b>Workshop Topic: Focal Virtues</b>	<b>Workshop Subtopic: Imitating the Virtuous Service of the Holy Angels</b>
Thursday, May 14, 2026	Virtues 1-4: Wisdom, Prudence, Piety, Zeal	The first three choirs of holy angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones
Thursday, May 21, 2026	Virtues 5-8: Generosity, Justice, Kindness, Firmness	The second three choirs of holy angels: Dominions, Powers, Principalities
Thursday, May 28, 2026	Virtues 9-12: Humility, Patience, Seriousness, Silence	The last three choirs of holy angels: Virtues, Archangels, Angels

## Safe Environment Training

Across parishes in the Diocese of Springfield, practices are undertaken to ensure that a safe environment for all is maintained. Working with a variety of vulnerable populations in religious education, including children and neurodivergent people of all abilities, we enact measures to ensure that the communities we serve are protected. We recognize each person as a reflection of Christ, respecting their dignity as a child of God.

Each volunteer demonstrates a commitment to creating a safe environment that honors the dignity of the human person. Per safe environment training guidelines, catechists:

- ✝ Complete a CORI form
- ✝ Complete a code of conduct form
- ✝ Complete Virtus training
  - Certification
  - Recertification

Volunteers empower students to use their voices, respecting their God-endowed dignity, and the dignity of those around them. Catechists are models of Christlike behaviors that embody kindness, patience, and charity.

Regular background checks help to ensure that databases are kept current, and that volunteers have a shared goal of keeping others safe in the parish community. So, too, does completion of the code of conduct form promote understanding of standard policies and procedures surrounding appropriate, God-honoring interactions with children and other vulnerable groups.

Virtus training illustrates to catechists how to contribute to a safe environment, outlining how to distinguish between safe and unsafe behaviors, recognize signs of abuse being experienced by vulnerable populations, and carry out the process of reporting unsafe behaviors.

Training modules are delivered online and in-person. After creating an account, or returning to an existing account, catechists will see which modules require completion. On one's account, the user may access their training history, seeing how often they will need to be recertified after completing initial training.

2024-2027 marks the new three-year compliance cycle for the diocese. In 2025, returning volunteers need not submit a new CORI form, but new volunteers not already in our database will submit a CORI form, denoting whether they have lived in-state for at least three years; out-of-state volunteers will have different requirements for CORI form completion. During this period, new volunteers will also complete Virtus modules, including the newest module that expands upon information related to caregiving for vulnerable adults, with an emphasis on how to enact safe and appropriate behaviors as care providers, so that the dignity of the person we care for is always respected.

### Additional Resources: Links

To complete safe environment training in preparation for the upcoming religious education year, please refer to these sites.

- ✝ CORI form link:  
<https://files.ecatholic.com/35851/documents/2024/8/CORI%20English%207.22.24.pdf?t=1722520923000>
- ✝ Diocese of Springfield, MA Code of Conduct form link:  
<http://diospringfield.org/wp-content/uploads/JUNE-2017-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>
- ✝ Diocese of Springfield, MA Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance website: <https://diospringfield.org/safe-environment>
- ✝ Virtus training website link:  
<https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/index.cfm?>
- ✝ Instructions for creating a Virtus account:  
<https://www.virtus.org/facilitators/VIRTUSregistration.pdf#:~:text=Go%20to%20http%3A%2F%2Fwww.virtusonline.org%20On%20the%20left-hand%20side%20of,organization.%20Once%20your%20organization%20is%20selected%2C%20click%20%E2%80%9CSelect.%E2%80%9D>

Visit our parish website's religious education webpage for further reference materials within our catechist corner, including these resources.

- ✝ All OLV religious education materials:  
<https://olveasthampton.org/religious-education/>
- ✝ Complete OLV list of safe environment training links:  
<https://ourladyofthevalley944653919.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/safe-environment-resources-1.docx>
- ✝ Complete OLV safe environment training guide for volunteers:  
<https://ourladyofthevalley944653919.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/safe-environment-training-for-volunteers-1.docx>

For articles, videos, and other media related to catechesis, visit Loyola's "Catechist's Journey" website.

- ✝ <https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/>

### Recommended Reading

Please review the following books, articles, and catechetical encyclicals/Church documents to assist you in your catechetical leadership training:

- ✠ *Acerbo Nimis*: Pope Pius X encyclical on catechesis (1905):
  - [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_15041905\\_acerbo-nimis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_15041905_acerbo-nimis.html)
- ✠ *Baltimore Catechism* online (1891):
  - <http://baltimore-catechism.com/index.htm>
- ✠ Catechetical Sunday: September 21, 2025
  - <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/catechetical-sunday-about>
- ✠ *Catechesi Tradendae*: Pope John Paul II encyclical on catechesis (1979):
  - [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html)
- ✠ Catechism of the Catholic Church (online; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2018):
  - <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/>
- ✠ Catechism of the Catholic Church (USCCB FAQs):
  - <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church>
- ✠ Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:
  - [https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium\\_ccc/documents/archive\\_2005\\_compendium-ccc\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html)
- ✠ *Fides Per Doctrinam*: Benedict XVI encyclical on catechesis (2013):
  - [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_motu-proprio\\_20130116\\_fides-per-doctrinam.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20130116_fides-per-doctrinam.html)
- ✠ *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997/8):
  - [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_17041998\\_directory-for-catechesis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html)
- ✠ *Guide for Catechists* (1993):
  - [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cevangel/documents/rc\\_con\\_cevang\\_doc\\_19971203\\_cath\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevangel/documents/rc_con_cevang_doc_19971203_cath_en.html)
- ✠ *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* (2018-2025, National Association for Lay Ministry)
  - [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nalm.org/resource/resmgr/document/s/standards\\_&\\_formation/national\\_standards\\_2018-2025.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nalm.org/resource/resmgr/document/s/standards_&_formation/national_standards_2018-2025.pdf)
- ✠ *The Effective Catechetical Leader* series:

- [https://www.comcenter.com/product/LOYO-46425/The-Effective-Catechetical-Leader-The-Effective-Catechetical-Leader-Series-English/?utm\\_campaign=shopping&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_source=shopping&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIkOaTlr-0gQMVpxGzAB34GgGiEAQYASABEgIS7PD\\_BwE](https://www.comcenter.com/product/LOYO-46425/The-Effective-Catechetical-Leader-The-Effective-Catechetical-Leader-Series-English/?utm_campaign=shopping&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=shopping&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIkOaTlr-0gQMVpxGzAB34GgGiEAQYASABEgIS7PD_BwE)
- *Called by Name: Preparing Yourself for the Vocation of Catechetical Leader* by Joe Paprocki (NCCL & Loyola Press, 2017)
- *All God's People: Effective Catechesis in a Diverse Church* by Donna Toliver Grimes (NCCL & Loyola Press)
- *Developing Disciples of Christ: Understanding the Critical Relationship between Catechesis and Evangelization* by Julianne Stanz (NCCL & Loyola Press)
- *Excellence in Ministry: Best Practices for Successful Catechetical Leadership* by Tom Quinlan (NCCL & Loyola Press)
- *Catechetical Leadership: What it Should Look Like, How it Should Work, and Whom it Should Serve* by Adrian Alberto Herrera (NCCL & Loyola Press)
- ✝ *The New Directory for Catechesis* (USCCB, 2020):
  - <https://www.orderosv.com/product/directory-for-catechesis>
  - <https://www.usccb.org/resources/directory-catechesis-new-edition>
  - [https://www.cathdal.org/The New Directory for Catechesis Do D presentation Final \[Autosaved\].pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/The%20New%20Directory%20for%20Catechesis%20Do%20D%20presentation%20Final%20[Autosaved].pdf) (PowerPoint highlighting changes in directory, key themes)
- ✝ Searchable Catechism of the Catholic Church:
  - <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism/>
- ✝ Self-study of Church history, social teachings
  - <http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/>
- ✝ United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (2006):
  - <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/uscca/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html#>

## Opportunities for Catechetical Certification and Professional Development

### Catechetical Leadership Institute

- ✝ Catechist online training modules (Franciscan University of Steubenville)
  - <https://franciscanathome.com/sites/default/files/uploads/document/s/Catechist%20Track%20Sheet%20%28CT%29%20ENG.pdf>

### Diocesan Catechetical Leadership Certification

- ✝ Contact Celeste Labbe, Faith Formation Director for the Diocese of Springfield, for additional information on diocese-wide trainings offered to catechists each year
  - [c.labbe@diospringfield.org](mailto:c.labbe@diospringfield.org)
  - 413-452-0841

### *Effective Catechetical Leadership* Self-Evaluation Tools

- ✝ [https://lp-pardot.s3.amazonaws.com/CalledByName\\_ActivitySheets.pdf](https://lp-pardot.s3.amazonaws.com/CalledByName_ActivitySheets.pdf)
- ✝ [https://lp-pardot.s3.amazonaws.com/CultivatingCatechists\\_ActivitySheets.pdf](https://lp-pardot.s3.amazonaws.com/CultivatingCatechists_ActivitySheets.pdf)

Marian Catechist Apostolate: catechetical courses, consecration, and membership; training manual originally developed for Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity

- ✝ <https://mariancatechist.com/>

### National Community of Catechetical Leaders

- ✝ <https://www.ncclcatholic.org/online-conferences.html>
- ✝ <https://www.ncclcatholic.org/library.html>

### NCPD (National Catholic Partnership on Disability)

- ✝ <https://ncpd.org/>
  - <https://ncpd.org/events>
  - <https://ncpd.org/program-type/catechesis>

### SPRED (Special Religious Education Chicago resources)

- ✝ <https://www.spred-chicago.org/>
  - <https://www.spred-chicago.org/resources>
  - <https://www.spred-chicago.org/method>

### University of Dayton

- ✝ Online catechist training modules: earn continuing education units
  - <https://vlcff.udayton.edu/certificates/catechesis.php>

### Prayers for Catechists

Each day, we reconsecrate ourselves to God, offering our work to honor Him. We offer our hearts, minds, and souls to the service of God, asking Him to help us communicate His love through the work we do to teach others about Him, that we may be like the holy angels in radiating the splendor of His love, a light by which to illuminate the path to Heaven, the path to union with the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Every day, we can also offer three “Hail Mary” prayers, one for each Person of the Trinity, for a special intention, when we pray the Angelus at morning, noon, and night, uniting our prayers with the holy angels in venerating Our Lady and reverencing Our Lord, sanctifying our time throughout the day. Prayers may be offered for our catechists, students, clergy, religious education program, and parish family as a whole. Deep within, we open the ears of our hearts to always hear the Angelus bell ringing, calling us back to the tabernacle, where Christ’s Heart awaits us, to praise Him after we complete our missions.

We strive to always remain oriented towards the tabernacle, the womb of Our Lady where we grow, and are sustained by the nutrients given from her Heart of love, that feed us in our journey to become like her Son, Who dwelt within Our Lady, the living ciborium. We consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mother Mary, always committing ourselves anew to following them as we entrust our hearts to the Two Hearts, that we may nurture the souls of children with the spiritual food offered to us by Christ from His Heart, bringing them to Our Lady, Queen of the Angels in order to lead them to the Bread of the Angels. In turning towards Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the Son of God in the tabernacle, we are like flowers turning towards the sun that we need for our growth. We pray for the holy angels to keep us always adoring Christ, that we may help others to adore Him in all that they do, too, teaching the way of light and hope.

A number of saints and holy angels accompany us in our journey to instill a deeper love of God through education. Ultimately, every saint is a teacher of holiness who has learned from Christ the Teacher. These prayers will assist us in centering our minds and hearts on Christ as we imitate His wisdom, gentleness, and humility in teaching. We ask the saints for their intercession in helping us to guide souls to Christ, just as they did in their earthly lives, and continue to do from their places in Heaven. Additionally, we seek the intercession of patron saints for students, asking them to help our students open their hearts to receiving knowledge of God, so that they may more deeply feel His love.

- ✠ Saints of catechists and catechesis include St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Peter Canisius, Pope St. Pius X, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and St. Charles Borromeo
- ✠ Saints of education and Catholic teachers include St. Angela Merici, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, St. John Bosco, St. Jean-Baptiste de la

Salle, St. John Cantius, St. Marcellin, St. Finnian, St. Ignatius de Loyola, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ursula, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Julie Billiart

✠ Saints of students include St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Dominic Savio, St. Gemma Galgani, St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Gabriel Possenti, and St. Aloysius Gonzaga

✠ Saints for First Communicants include Pope St. Pius X, St. Tarcisius, and Blessed Imelda Lambertini

✠ St. Philip Neri is the patron saint of Confirmation

The Holy Spirit bestows on us the Gifts we need to be good learners and teachers. Each Gift of the Holy Spirit (fortitude, knowledge, counsel, wisdom, understanding, piety, and fear of the Lord) enables us to be an effective catechist, to do what is needed to build God's Kingdom. We pray to the Holy Spirit to inspire us and guide our work, so that it best reflects God's love, and most deeply reaches other people.

### **Prayer to the Holy Spirit (Before Any Work)**

Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.

Send forth Thy spirit, and they shall be created.

And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray: O God, Who hast taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Examen for Catechists**

Reflection is essential to effective instruction. If we are to engage in continual improvement, we begin by reflecting on past actions, thinking about how we could better achieve our goals in the future, based on what we learned from our experiences.

In the Ignatian spiritual tradition, the examen is used to deepen connection with Christ through reflection on the interior life, the life of the soul. The examen is a form of mental prayer similar to the examination of conscience that is used before going to Confession.

### **Prayer to Our Lady of Good Success**

Our patron for the 2023-24 religious education year was Our Lady of Good Success. We continue to pray for the success of our religious education ministry.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hail Mary Most Holy, Beloved Daughter of God the Father Through the intercession of Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, grant thy good success to this request. (State your intention here)

✧ Our Father

✧ Hail Mary

✧ Glory Be

St. Michael, pray for us.

St. Gabriel, pray for us.

St Raphael, pray for us.

Hail Mary Most Holy, Temple and Sacrament of the Most Holy Trinity. St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, pray for us. Our Lady of Good Success, thou who art the all-powerful intercessor before the Most Holy Trinity, deign to hear and answer my request – so long as it contributes to the salvation of my soul and the glory and exaltation of Holy Mother Church.

✧ Hail, Holy Queen”

\*See the complete novena to Our Lady of Good Success here:

<https://novenaprayer.com/2021/01/24/our-lady-of-good-success-novena/>

### **In Honor of All the Holy Angels**

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, we praise and bless Thee not only because Thou hast created the visible world, but also because Thou hast created the heavens and called the numberless spirits into being. Thou didst create them most splendidly, endowing them with power and understanding and pouring out upon them the riches of Thy grace. We praise and thank Thee for having showered Thy graces upon the good angels and rewarded them with eternal glory after the time of their probation. Now they surround Thy throne forever, singing in jubilant accord:

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts! Heaven and Earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest!

O Eternal God, Thy holy angels serve Thee with constant fidelity and ready obedience. They carry out Thy commands with fervent love and sacred enthusiasm. We thank Thee, O Lord, for the example which Thou hast given us through Thy princes, our holy protectors.

We will gladly follow the example they have given us. All you holy angels, intercede for us that we may share in your burning zeal and glowing love. Help us to become worthy

messengers and true servants of God, to proclaim His holy will, and to spread the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ. Amen.

### **Guardian Angel Prayer**

Angel of God, my Guardian dear,  
To whom His love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, rule and guide. Amen.

### **Prayer to St. Gabriel for Protection for Those Whom we Love**

O loving messenger of the Incarnation, do thou descend upon all those for whom I wish peace and happiness. Spread thy wings over the cradles of newborn babes, O thou who didst announce the coming of the Infant Jesus. Give to the young a lily petal from the virginal scepter in thy hand. Cause the Ave Maria to echo through all hearts, that they may find grace and joy through Mary. Finally, deign to recall those sublime words which were uttered on the day of the Annunciation, "Nothing shall be impossible with God", and repeat them in hours of trial to all those whom I love, that their confidence in our Lord may be rekindled when all other help fails. Amen.

### **Prayer to St. Gabriel for the Benefit of the Incarnation**

O blessed Archangel Gabriel, we beseech Thee, do thou intercede for us at the throne of divine mercy in our present necessities, that, as thou didst announce to holy St. Mary the mystery of the Incarnation, so, through thy prayers and patronage in Heaven, we may attain the benefits of the Redemption for which Christ came unto us, and sing the praises of God forever in the land of the living. Amen.

### **St. Therese of Lisieux's Poem for her Holy Guardian Angel**

O glorious guardian of my frame!  
In heaven's high courts thou shinest bright,  
As some most pure and holy flame,  
Before the Lord of endless light.  
Yet for my sake thou com'st to earth,  
To be my brother, Angel dear:  
My friend and keeper from my birth,  
By day and night to me most near. Knowing how weak a child am I,

By thy strong hand thou guidest me;  
The stones that in my pathway lie,  
I see thee move them carefully.  
Ever thy heavenly tones invite  
My soul to look to God alone;  
And ever grows thy face more bright,  
When I more meek and kind have grown. O thou who speedest through all space  
More swiftly than the lightnings fly!  
Go very often, in my place,  
To those I love most tenderly.  
With thy soft touch, oh! dry their tears;  
Tell them the cross is sweet to bear;  
Speak my name softly in their ears,  
And Jesu's name, supremely fair. Through all my life, though brief it be,  
I fain would succor souls from sin.  
Dear Angel, sent from heaven to me,  
Kindle thy zeal my heart within!  
Naught but my holy poverty,  
And daily cross to give have I;  
O join them to thine ecstasy,  
And offer them to God on high. Thine are heaven's glory and delight,  
The riches of the King of kings;  
The Host in our ciboriums bright  
Is mine, and all the wealth pain brings.  
So with the Cross, and with the Host,  
And with thine aid, dear Angel Friend,  
I wait in peace, on time's dark coast,

Heaven's happiness that knows no end.

**Guardian Angel Spiritual Communion Prayer**

O holy angel at my side,  
Go to church for me,  
Kneel in my place, at Holy Mass,  
Where I desire to be.

At Offertory, in my stead,  
Take all I am and own,  
And place it as a sacrifice  
Upon the Altar Throne.

At Holy Consecration's bell,  
Adore with Seraph's love,  
My Jesus hidden in the Host,  
Come down from Heaven above.

Then pray for those I dearly love,  
And those who cause me grief,  
That Jesus' Blood may cleanse all hearts,  
And suffering souls relieve.

And when the priest Communion takes,  
Oh, bring my Lord to me,  
That His sweet Heart may rest on mine,  
And I His temple be.

Pray that this Sacrifice Divine,  
 May mankind's sins efface;  
 Then bring me Jesus' blessing home,  
 The pledge of every grace. Amen.

### **Virgin of the Angels Prayer**

O Virgin of the Angels, who has for centuries established your throne of mercy at the Portiuncula, hear the prayer of your children, who trust in you. From this truly holy place and the habitation of the Lord, so dear to the heart of Saint Francis, you have always invited all men to love. Your tender eyes assure us of a never failing motherly help and a promise of divine help to all those who humbly have recourse to your throne, or who from afar, turn to you to ask for help. You are, indeed, our sweet Queen and our only hope.

O Lady of the Angels, obtain for us, through the intercession of blessed Francis, pardon for our sins, help us to keep away from sin and indifference, so that we shall be worthy of calling you our Mother for evermore. Bless our homes, our toil and our rest, by giving us that same serenity we experience within the walls of the Portiuncula, where hate, guilt and tears turn into a song of joy like that once was sung by the Angels and the seraphic Francis.

Help those who are in need and hungry, those who are in danger of body and soul, those who are sad and downhearted, those who are sick and dying. Bless us, your most beloved children, and we pray you, bless also with the same motherly gesture, all those who are innocent, together with those who are guilty; those who are faithful, together with those who have gone astray; those who believe, together with those who are in doubt. Bless all humanity, so that all men acknowledging that they are God's children, would find through love, real peace and real good. Amen.

### **Prayer of Consecration to Our Lady of the Angels**

*by Katie Sadakierski*

Our Lady of the Angels, I consecrate myself to Our Blessed Lord through you, entrusting the works of my hands, heart, mind, and soul to you, that you may convey all I do to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to be treasured therein. I pray that you would guide me to teach my students to honor the treasures of our Faith by example, as I give you all of the things of Our Lord that I treasure in my heart to safeguard and cherish. Adorn my heart with your virtues, O Lady of the Angels, that I may be a treasury of Jesus' wisdom, knowledge, and love, to share with everyone I serve in my ministry as catechist. Our Lady of the Angels, pray for me, and for all of my students, that as I live out my consecration to Our Lord through you, I may serve as an instrument of your

angelic kindness, inspiring other souls to consecrate themselves to Jesus through you, that they may know the sweetness of spiritual union with the Two Hearts, and be led to Heaven to dwell with you forever, treasured in your Hearts eternally. I open my heart to receive the graces of God from your hands, offering myself to Our Lord as a channel of His love, like you. Help me to be a vessel of grace molded to your image, a reflection of the light of Jesus, our greatest Friend, that, through your kind help, I may lead everyone I serve in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ to friendship with Him. Thank you, dear Lady, for your intercession for me, and graciously accept every flower of faith, hope, and love that I offer humbly to you and your Son in a bouquet woven with joy, in grateful veneration of you, the cause of our joy. Amen.

### **Consecration to One's Holy Guardian Angel**

*by Katie Sadakierski*

Holy guardian angel, I consecrate myself to you, praying that you would help me to embody your faithfulness in my service to God and His people. In my ministry, please watch over me, and all those whom I serve, helping us all to unite in love for God, and to reflect His love, as you and all of the holy angels do. Holy guardian angel, you are my friend and helper. Thank you for being with me each step of the way as I journey towards God. Guide my heart to love God all the more, and inspire me to share my faith wholeheartedly, that I may be a guardian and friend to the neighbors I minister to, a teacher like you. Assist me in opening my heart to receive God's light and peace, that I may be illuminated with it as you are, helping to warm many hearts with the rays of His holy love. Amen.

### **Intercessions**

We ask for the prayers of our patron saints watching over our ministry from Heaven, petitioning the holy guardian angel of our parish in a special way, the holy guardian angels of each of our students, and our own holy angel guardians. May our parish patronesses, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of the Valley, guide all in our parish to more deeply love Our Lord, and to follow the sacred inspirations of the holy angels, who draw us closer to Christ, our King. May we look to the holy angels as our own catechists, that we may imitate them in teaching devotion to Jesus and Mother Mary well!

### **OLV Catechist Litany of the Saints**

*St. Michael the Archangel, pray for us!*

*St. Pius of Pietrelcina, pray for us!*

*St. Wenceslaus, pray for us!*

*St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!*

*St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us!*  
*St. Therese of Lisieux, pray for us!*  
*Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin, pray for us!*  
*St. Raphael the Archangel, pray for us!*  
*St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, pray for us!*  
*St. Catherine of Alexandria, pray for us!*  
*St. Gertrude, pray for us!*  
*St. Cecilia, pray for us!*  
*St. Stephen, pray for us!*  
*St. John the Evangelist, pray for us!*  
*St. David the King, pray for us!*  
*St. Francis de Sales, pray for us!*  
*St. Andre Bessette, pray for us!*  
*St. Agnes of Rome, pray for us!*  
*St. Dorothy, pray for us!*  
*St. Brigid of Kildare, pray for us!*  
*St. Patrick of Ireland, pray for us!*  
*St. Catherine de Ricci, pray for us!*  
*St. Gabriel the Archangel, pray for us!*  
*St. Catherine of Bologna, pray for us!*  
*St. Frances of Rome, pray for us!*  
*St. Gemma Galgani, pray for us!*  
*St. Mark the Evangelist, pray for us!*  
*St. Catherine of Siena, pray for us!*  
*St. Isidore the Farmer, pray for us!*  
*St. Philip Neri, pray for us!*  
*St. Robert Bellarmine, pray for us!*

*St. Charles Borromeo, pray for us!*

*St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us!*

*St. Angela Merici, pray for us!*

*St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, pray for us!*

*St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, pray for us!*

*Holy guardian angels, pray for us!*

*Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, pray for us!*

*Our Lady, Queen of Angels, pray for us!*

*Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception, pray for us!*

*Our Lady of the Valley, pray for us!*

## Reflections for Catechists: Pre- and Post-Year Self-Evaluations

### Pre-Year Assessment, REY 2025-26

In preparing for the 2025-26 religious education year, please prayerfully complete these prompts to guide you in developing your goals and planned action steps for catechesis this year.

**This year, my goal as a catechist is to:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**To achieve my goal, I will:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**The catechist standard I want to most focus on growing in is:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**because** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**For my personal patron saint this year, I choose** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, **because** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**When I think about the choirs of holy angels, I most want to imitate the choir of** \_\_\_\_\_ **in their service**

**to God, because** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**I most want to grow in the virtue of** \_\_\_\_\_.

**To help me achieve this, I will** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

**My special prayer intention is:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

**Post-Year Assessment, REY 2025-26**

In preparing for the 2026-27 religious education year, please prayerfully complete these prompts to guide you in developing your goals and planned action steps for catechesis the new year, based on your reflection on your past year as a catechist.

**This past year, my goal as a catechist was to:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**To achieve this goal, I:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**The catechist standard I best fulfilled was** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**because** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**In the future, the standard I want to work on is** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, **because** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**For my personal patron saint this year, I chose** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. **When I reflect on my relationship with my**  
**patron saint now, I notice that** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**When I think about the choirs of holy angels, I best emulated the choir of**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **in service to God as a**  
**catechist this year, because** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**The achievement I was most proud of this year is:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**I thank God for:** \_\_\_\_\_.





