

Epiphany of Our Lord Religious Education Program Parent and Student Handbook 2024-2025



***Epiphany of Our Lord
Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)
3050 Walton Road
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462
215 367-5853
Email: rep@epiphanyrep.com***

Epiphany of Our Lord Religious Education

Mission Statement

The Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) is devoted and committed to Jesus Christ Our Lord, and dedicated to the proclamation of His Word through the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, in union with our Archbishop and Pastor. The Program is committed to educating our youth in the Catholic heritage, to form them according to the gospel values and develop in them a full sense of participation in our Catholic community. PREP supports parents, who are the primary educators, by fostering the faith of their children and assisting them to live it daily. Together, PREP and the home foster within the child a personal recognition of God's love for them while they embrace the Gospel values of Jesus Christ.

Epiphany of Our Lord Religious Education and Teaching of the Catholic Faith

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity." (St. John Paul II)

"Catechesis describes the essential ministry of the (Catholic) Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages...Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine" of the Roman Catholic Church. (*National Directory for Catechesis*, no.1, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Keeping in mind that all the baptized have a right to catechesis, every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness (*General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 189). Catechetical and sacramental programs are inclusive of parishioners with disabilities and may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities.

Role of the Parents

Epiphany of Our Lord parish community affirms the teaching of the church which states that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. By word and example, they lead their children to live a Christian life. It is the parent's role to create an atmosphere of love and reverence for God and humanity so that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered in the child. The vital influence of parents on the religious development of children must be recognized. PREP can only support and strengthen the values that are already being fostered in the home. With your help in the following areas, together we can make your child's PREP experience positive and productive:

- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days
- Participate in the Sacraments; Reconciliation and Eucharist
- Teach your child to pray in their own words as well as the required prayers for their level
- Make sure your child completes assignments and reviews all materials
- Join your child in participating in age-appropriate parish activities
- Assist in your child's classroom as needed

PREP ADMINISTRATION

Pastor/Parochial Administrator:

- Father Thomas O' Donald
- Phone: 610-828-8634

Religious Education (PREP):

- Linda DiCampli, Coordinator
- Phone: 215-367-5853
- Email: rep@epiphanyrep.com

- Maryann Schieve, Administrative Assistant
- Phone: 215-367-5853
- repadmin@epiphanyrep.com

Religious Education Office Hours:

- Monday 3:30pm – 8:30pm (September thru May)
- All other days please call 215 367-5853 to make sure someone is in the office.

REP Website:

- www.epiphanyoffourlord.com

Class Time:

- PREP Grades 1-7 Monday 6:30pm – 7:45pm

Weather Related Closing Information:

- Closing information will be emailed.
- When PREP classes are cancelled, students are expected to complete written and study assignments for that week as indicated on the pacing chart.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE – Faith formation received in the program is ongoing in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is important that children attend their classes regularly. If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent **MUST** complete the following procedures:

- Call the Religious Education Office (215) 367-5853 or email rep@epiphanyrep.com to report the absence. Please be sure to include your child's name and grade.
- Late students must arrive through the main school door to check in before proceeding to their classroom as all other doors will be locked.
- The **maximum number** of absences from class during the year is **three (3)**. If a child exceeds this number, make-up work may be assigned by the Program Director.
- Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program.
- Chronic absences may interfere with your child's grade promotion and reception of sacraments.

LATENESS - Sessions begin promptly at 6:30pm. Students arriving after 6:30 will be considered late. Lateness will be noted on Progress Reports. Chronic lateness may require a conference with a parent and may interfere with your child's promotion and reception of sacraments.

ARRIVAL - Students should arrive to the gym at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the program. Please be mindful of school area speed limits, parking designations, common driver courtesy, traffic regulations and **especially our children**.

- **GRADES 1 – 2 STUDENTS MUST BE ESCORTED BY A PARENT** and enter the school's main doors on Walton Road.
- **STUDENT DROP OFF GRADES 3 – 7:** use the main Grady Hall entrance. Please pull up to the drop off area and then let your student get out of the car. Do not drive behind the convent.

DISMISSAL – All students will be dismissed from their classroom. First and second grade students need to be signed out with his or her teacher/aide. For the safety of our children, please do not remain in the hallways after dismissal. If you are late picking-up your child, please come to the PREP office.

EARLY DISMISSAL – Since we only meet once a week, early dismissal is discouraged. If a child must leave PREP early, the parent must go to the office and sign the child out. The office will call the child's classroom and have him/her sent to the office accompanied by an aide. No parent is to go directly to the classroom and no child will be sent to the office prior to the parent's arrival.

ENROLLMENT - The faith formation provided in our program is a curriculum that builds upon the previous year. It is essential that students remain enrolled in the program consistently from year-to-year. If a parent or guardian chooses to wait and enroll their student when they are in 2nd grade level, the student may be placed into the 1st grade level PREP. Any student who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year may be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program.

SACRAMENTS - Because Church law dictates that a person must be baptized before any other Sacraments are celebrated, **proof of Baptism is required** for all children unless the child was baptized at Epiphany of our Lord Parish.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) in the parish where their family is registered.

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A student's desire to celebrate the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus, proper attendance and behavior are expected.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS - It is the responsibility of the legal guardians to provide the Religious Education Program with the most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. These documents should be submitted with your completed registration form. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of the legal guardians to provide that document to the PREP office immediately.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

COMMUNICATION

- **Calendar** - Parents are provided with a yearly calendar. ***This calendar is subject to change during the course of the year.*** Parents will be notified of changes by email.
- **Email & Telephone** – Communication between the Religious Education Office (program director and or administrative assistant) and families is done via email and telephone. Monthly emails are sent which contain meeting updates and other important information. Please check for messages from rep@epiphanyrep.com and **notify the office if you do not receive the monthly emails.** Parents are encouraged to email or call the Religious Education Office (215)367-5853 with any questions, concerns or comments.
- **Student Folders** - Each student receives a **two-pocket folder** to hold their important papers. Parents should **check** this folder after each class to collect whatever flyers, bulletins, etc. being sent home. Often these papers contain current information about events, assignments, collections, and other communications from the parish, the catechist or the coordinator. Papers sent home from REP or papers from home that need to be returned to class need to be placed in the pocket marked as such. Papers used in class will be placed in the folder pocket labeled **“Remains in Folder”**.
- **Parent/Guardian Meeting** - Each year the Religious Education Program will conduct a meeting for new parents/guardians to the program in September. Newly registered families **MUST** have at least one parent attend the meeting.
- **PREP Opening Night:**
 - **Opening Prayer Service**
 - Parents are encouraged to attend
 - Parent social with Father O’Donald
 - Meet the Catechist
- All parents are required to read the Parent Handbook.
- **Consultation with your child’s Catechist** - Direct communication with the student’s catechist is a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to contact their child’s catechist to discuss any concerns.

CELL PHONES - We realize that cell phones have become a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children and are helpful with new technology in the classroom. Catechist may instruct students to use their device during class for access to QR codes or instructional searches. However, it is the policy of this program that cell phones may NOT be used for personal use during the PREP class time, except for emergencies from home. If a student is using a cell phone while not instructed during class, the device will be taken from the student and returned at the end of class.

HOMEWORK – The child’s homework each week is to review the lesson(s) taught each Monday night to reinforce what was taught and to have a good understanding of the Catholic faith. This assignment may be emailed to families by Catechist. Understanding the faith helps shape the child’s moral character and is essential to living the faith. Catechists may assign additional homework to support the child’s understanding of the lessons.

Catechists may promote assignments that engage the parents of the children not only in the supervision of the assignment’s completion, but draw the parent into a shared faith experience with the child.

PACING CHART – Every student receives a pacing chart or syllabus. The pacing chart lists by date the material that is expected to be covered in class and at home for that week.

ABSENTEE ASSIGNMENTS – Any student who misses PREP classes is expected to complete all work assigned on the pacing chart before returning to the next class.

TESTING – Students will be assessed on a weekly basis or as per catechist. These assessments may reflect the material introduced in the previous session. Assessments may be assigned as homework, either online or through paper copy, and should be completed by the next PREP class. If a child is absent, he/she will complete the assessment during the next PREP class or it may be sent home for completion and needs to be brought back to class. Since assessments are given on a weekly basis, they are not noted on the pacing chart. If a student consistently does not know the material, parents will be notified by the catechists. Please review those concepts so your child can be reassessed.

PROGRESS REPORTS – The areas of evaluation on the progress report are: Knowledge of Religion, which is an average of assessment and homework grades, Knowledge of Prayers, Effort and Conduct. Progress reports are issued in January and April and will be distributed to the children in class. Issue of progress reports is listed on the religious education calendar.

Marking Code

- (E) Exceeds Expectations
- (M) Meets Expectations
- (P) Progressing in Prayers
- (NI) Needs Improvement

WORKS OF MERCY PROJECTS – works of mercy projects will be conducted throughout the Religious Education year through donation requests. All students are encouraged to participate.

DISCIPLINE - The Parish Religious Education Program offered by Epiphany of Our Lord Parish (PREP) is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behaviors that are in accord with Catholic Church's teachings. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional, or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The parish/program director determines what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of the classroom; where such improper behavior affects the Religious Education community.

Conduct by children or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish may be grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the student, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

In addition, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written or electronic, by a child against any member of the PREP community, the child, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance *before* returning to PREP.

In the event a student engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist's attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the following action may be taken and at the discretion of the Pastor or Coordinator of Religious Education:

1. **First Incident:** The student will be sent to the office to speak with the program director and the parent or guardian may be notified by phone by the program director. The program director may schedule a conference with the parents or guardians, the student, and catechist to discuss the matter.
2. **Second Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and may be suspended from the program for a period of one session. The parents or guardians will be notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program the program director may schedule a conference with the parents or guardians, student, and catechist to further discuss the matter. Should a conference be necessary, any incidents afterwards will implement the policy listed under Third Incident.

3. **Third Incident:** The student will be removed from the session and may be dismissed from the program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the program director, parents or guardians, student, and catechist, the parents or guardians will be provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case, no refund of tuition will be made.

However, Epiphany of Our Lord Religious Education Program reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

CONTRABAND - BRINGING CONTRABAND TO REP SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

1. Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to, gum, food, beverages, toys, electronic games, I-Pods, weapons, drugs, alcohol and tobacco products.
2. It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the program.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE - It is the policy of the Parish Religious Education Program of Epiphany of Our Lord to respect the privacy of its students. However, in the event that a student is suspected of having weapons or drugs in his/her possession or is believed to be a threat to him/her or others, the director will be notified immediately. The director may conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Refusal on the part of the student to cooperate will result in the parents/guardians being contacted and asked to assist with the search. Parental refusal may result in the student's immediate dismissal of the program.

ALLERGIES

In light of the many PREP students with food allergies, Epiphany of Our Lord's Religious Education Program is making every reasonable accommodation to lessen the possibility of exposure to food allergens by designating all classrooms as Snack Free Zones. This policy is to be followed before, during and after PREP time.

If there is an occasion for a special celebration which includes special foods or snacks, the event shall be held in a communal PREP setting.

A parent or guardian of a student with a food allergy must be present at such gatherings and provide a snack for his/her child (ren.)

Another possibility is an allergy free snack table, but it must include snacks which are free of all types of allergens which have been identified on the student registration form or another form of communication (written or verbal) from the family to the D/CRE.

The program coordinator reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.

(Revised 6/2024)