

Catechist Handbook

*St. Bartholomew Parish
East Brunswick, NJ*

Revised August 2014

St. Bartholomew Church

Office of Religious Education

470 Ryders Lane

East Brunswick, NJ 08816

732-390-0354

Catechist Handbook
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Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation Program

Pastoral Team

Very Rev Thomas J. Walsh, Pastor
Rev. Antony Arockiadoss, Associate Pastor

Barbara Fitzgerald, Coordinator of Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation
Bfitzgerald@stbartseb.com
Linda Carulli, Program Assistant
Lcarulli@stbartseb.com

The Office of Religious Education is located on the second floor of the St. Bartholomew Parish Center. Resources for Religious Education are located in our offices. Catechists are encouraged to come by and make use of these resources in planning their lessons. We are here to assist you in any way that we can.

Telephone numbers:

Parish Office	(732)257-7722
Religious Education	(732)390-0354

Office hours for the office of Religious Education are as follows:

Monday	9:00 to 3:00	
Tuesday	9:00 to 3:00	(classes 4:30 to 7:45)
Wednesday	9:00 to 3:00	
Thursday	9:00 to 3:00	(classes 4:30 to 5:45)
Friday	9:00 to 12:00	

Whenever the office is unstaffed you may leave a message on the answering machine, and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Protecting God's Children

It is the policy of the Diocese of Metuchen that all adult volunteers must participate in the Protecting God's Children Program. This includes a background check by getting finger printed by the diocesan approved location. Submitting the Volunteer Application and attending a Virtus training session. All records of this process are submitted to the Office of Religious Education. All Catechist records including continuing education and Catechist Certification will be maintained in the Office of Religious Education.

Attire

Present a professional appearance at all times in dress, conduct, attitude, and all aspects of behavior. Remember, you are a role model for these children.

Arrival

Catechists and/or Aides are expected to be in their classrooms fifteen minutes before class begins. The students may not enter the classroom until an adult is present. They are to wait quietly in the hallway. Children are not to be left unattended for any reason.

When you come in to the building, please find your folder on the table and take it with you to your classroom.

Class Folder:

TEACHER ATTENDANCE is noted by the removal of the folder from the table. If your class folder is still on the table at the start of class time this is how we know to place a hall monitor or a last minute sub into your room.

When you get to your class, please open your folder and see the Weekly Catechist Memo. PLEASE READ IT BEFORE CLASS. The memo is our attempt to keep you informed of upcoming events and reminders and to provide support and encouragement.

DO NOWs: As a suggestion: every week during the time that the kids are arriving, there should be a DO NOW activity. For younger kids, it can be a coloring page that relates to the lesson, a current happening or a review of a prior lesson, for older kids it can be a review sheet or POP Quiz on their prayers.

Please take attendance in your Attendance Register. Only mark students who are absent or late. "Late" is arrival after 15 minutes (i.e. 4:46 or 6:46).

PLEASE LEAVE YOUR ATTENDANCE REGISTER IN THE FOLDER.

Any papers that are to be distributed to the children are in your folder, too. You may give them out in the beginning of class, or the end, but please give them out.

Make sure you have one, too. If you have kids that are absent, please write their names on the handouts and give them to them when they come back. That ensures that they get the information.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE, PLEASE PUT THE FOLDER BACK ON THE TABLE.

Security

Your safety and that of the students is a priority. Encourage your students to arrive on time. The doors to the building will be locked once classes are in session. All visitors and late arrivals will have to be admitted into the building by our Hall Monitor.

Attendance (Catechists)

When you are going to be out, you must call the office before **noon** at 732-390-0354 **and** call your assistant. Your assistant should be prepared at all times to act as your substitute. We leave our offices at 3:00 p.m. to set up for classes and are not always available to answer the phone in the school. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent on a certain date, please make note of it in your folder or email the office. It is vitally important for us to know that you won't be in class. We have a limited number of substitutes and cannot afford to leave a class unattended. We would like to be prepared.

Attendance (Students)

Students must be present for each class unless they are ill or there is a death in the family.

The limit on absences set by the Diocese of Metuchen is three for the entire school year.

Phone calls and/or notes are not necessary. Parents are expected to assist their child in making up work that has been missed due to absence, and turning it in to the Catechist. Catechists can facilitate this by handing the child their missed work when they return to class to be completed with a parent at home. For example, "Dear Parent, when name of child was absent, we covered the following work. Please cover this lesson at home." Obtaining the parents email is also suggested to inform the family of missed work.

If the child is absent four times throughout the year without any communication from the parents a warning note will be sent home to the parent. This note must be signed and returned to the catechist who will forward it to the office. Students who miss five (or more) classes during the year will be assigned "Incomplete" grades; it is up to the parent to discuss their child's individual circumstances with the DRE. **Promotion is not automatically guaranteed**; students must demonstrate grade-appropriate knowledge of concepts. Any student who receives two semesters of incomplete grades will not be permitted to re-register unless the family meets with the DRE.

Attendance Record

Thank you for keeping accurate attendance records. We are mandated by the Diocese of Metuchen to keep a Permanent Record Card for each student. The Students attendance is recorded on their record card at the end of the year. Please mark only the students who are absent with an "A". Students who are late (more than 10 minutes after the start of class) should be marked with an "L". The Attendance Record must be returned every week in the folder. These records become part of the permanent record for each child, and are closely

monitored by the office.

Early Dismissal If a student needs to be dismissed early from class the student should provide you with a note indicating the time to be dismissed. Once the parent arrives to pick up the student the Hall Monitor will come to the classroom to escort the child to be signed out by the parent.

Dismissal Policies

FIRST graders only may be picked up from the hall outside their classroom. All other children are to be picked up from inside the coned-off area of the parking lot in the assigned space for their classroom. Be sure to go to your designated spot each week for dismissal. There is no other area where children may be picked up. Parents are not to pull their child off the dismissal line. They must wait until you have arrived in your designated spot, we want to be sure each child is matched up with the appropriate adult. No children are permitted in the playground area unless their parent is physically with them on the playground during dismissal. After ten minutes, please bring any remaining students to the DRE, so that they can wait for parents inside the building or make needed phone calls. **No child will be permitted to leave the property unaccompanied by an adult.**

Emergency Religious Education Closings

Remember, if East Brunswick Schools or St. Bartholomew School is closed or has an early dismissal, there will be no Religious Education classes. Please refer to the Parish Website at www.stbartseb.com, EBTv or our greeting on our message machine in the office for notice of cancellation. We will also do our best to email our catechists.

Communication with Parents

It is important that catechists establish a personal connection to the families of the children entrusted to us in our ministry. Notes are a terrific way to establish contact with parents who are not on site. Escorting the children when they are dismissed allows for another connection, and further ensures the child's safety. Above all, families need to know that the catechist genuinely cares about their children.

Confidentiality

Information about problems with students and their families should be kept confidential in *most* cases. However, if the information may help a given teacher, then it may be shared in a professional manner. If a student has told a staff member that he or she is going to harm themselves or others, then the staff member must tell the DRE or another authority figure. Professional attitudes should be maintained regarding colleagues, students, parents, and

clergy.

Child Abuse Policy

If a Catechist/CRE suspects that a child has been or is being abused, NJ State Statutes require that Division of Youth and Family Services be notified ***immediately!***

Please read over the information that I have attached regarding child abuse and DYFS.

Behavior of Students

Students are expected to listen, cooperate with others, share and use words to solve problems. They are expected to respect others and themselves at all times. Abusive language and/or actions will not be tolerated. Discipline is maintained in order to allow religious education for all students and to help students mature as individuals

The Ten Commandments of Behavior

1. COURTESY AND RESPECT ARE EXPECTED FROM ALL STUDENTS AT ALL TIMES. Vulgar language or indecent gestures will not be tolerated.
2. Fighting, cheating, and vandalism of ANY school/church property are considered major offenses.
3. Students are to walk and use speaking voices inside the school.
4. There is to be NO candy, drinks, food of any kind, or gum during classes, unless stated otherwise by the DRE.
5. Students should remain at their desks, unless permission has been given otherwise.
6. Possession of cigarettes or illegal substances will not be tolerated.
7. Students should dress appropriately for class and Mass.
8. Respect other student's possessions/property.
9. All books and relevant materials must be brought to class each week, unless otherwise stated by the teacher.
10. All students must be dismissed from their designated parking area (except 1st Grade) at the appropriate time. All students must be released to an adult.

Catechists need to bring the following behaviors to the immediate attention of the DRE:

Fighting
Leaving premises without an adult
Stealing
Defacing property
Disruptive behavior in the class/Disrespectful behavior
Threatening violent acts toward self or others
Setting of false alarms, calling 911 without cause

Any child who exhibits behaviors listed above can expect that their parents will be called to come and get them, and they may be asked to withdraw from the program.

The Catechist should establish basic rules, "Class Rules" immediately with their students (for

guidelines, please refer children to the Parent Handbook). Children need to know acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Above all, be consistent and Christ-like in dealing with the students. Shouting at students is absolutely inappropriate. Work diligently to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES may corporal punishment of any type be used? The law defines corporal punishment as any punitive touching such as pushing, shoving, slapping, etc.

Calendar/Events

Please refer to the Class Calendar for all scheduled events. Please make note of the events that directly impact on your class. Details will be published weekly in the Catechist Memo.

On the last day of class before the Christmas break and the last day of the year **SMALL** celebrations are allowed. (These celebrations should be only a small portion of the class time including set up, food, and clean up which are each classroom's responsibility.) Please consider using these times also to celebrate the achievements of your students, for example: Look who had Perfect Attendance during the First Semester! Look who learned their prayers! Look who treated others in a Christ-like way! Make sure that the recognition includes all your students for different reasons. Look for the goodness in each child, and celebrate it!

Because of the children in the Religious Education program, and in Saint Bartholomew School, who have severe, life-threatening allergies to food, weekly eating in the classrooms is prohibited. If you choose to have a small celebration at the end of the semester with your class, ***please remember to check the health forms for food allergies and give notice to the parents that there will be food in the classroom.*** After your party, be sure that all surfaces are thoroughly cleaned. A child's life may depend on it.

Class Schedule

Religious Education classes are held in St. Bartholomew School for grades one through seven. Grade eight classes are held in the Parish Center. Class times are as follows:

Session I- Tuesday 4:30 to 5:45

Session III- Tuesday 6:30 to 7:45

Session III- Thursday 4:30 to 5:45

Classrooms

Please leave your classroom as you found it. Erase blackboards, close windows and turn off lights and fans (this is of particular importance for Tuesday evening and Thursday afternoon). We would like to continue a good relationship with the School Teachers. If there is a problem please bring it to the attention of the DRE. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Lesson Plans

It is helpful to plan and prepare in advance for your class. A lesson plan log should be kept in your folder and filled out every week. It is vitally important for me to have an idea of what you are covering in your classes. I need to be able to monitor your progress against the Diocesan Curriculum to ensure that students in each grade are attaining the same basic level of education. Simply list chapter/pages of text you'll be covering or an overview of the lesson for the day. In addition, if you need specific supplies (i.e. videos, art supplies, copies, etc.) please indicate that by note or email. Anticipated absences should also be stated on the lesson plan log so we can prepare for your substitute.

Curriculum Synopsis by Grade

Grade One

God, Father and Creator of the World
Jesus, the Son of God and our Friend
The Holy Spirit, Giver of Strength and Joy

Family Life Concepts:

The students review the meaning of family and identify the family structure.
The students see the uniqueness and value of their own human life.
The students learn ways to show respect for themselves and for others.
The students explore the nature of their feelings and the importance of sharing.
The students understand that they live in a society larger than their family or school.

Grade Two

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist
Jesus, Model for Christian Living

Grade Three

The traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church
The Apostles Creed and the Seven Sacraments

Family Life Concepts:

The students explore the similarities and differences of families.
The students develop their sense of self worth and learn to take better care of their health.
The students study the ecology of life on earth. They continue to explore the value of all life especially Human Life
The students understand reproduction as the way in which life is handed on by God.
The students understand the purpose and usefulness of feelings as a means of communicating and living with others.

Grade Four

The Beatitudes
Catholic Christian Moral Values
The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Family Life Concepts:

The students learn the value of life in the community, especially the family community.
The students learn about the complexities of their own bodies and how they grow.

The students learn to respect people of all ages. They grow in their understanding of ways to maintain health and safe.

The students evaluate their feelings toward others and learn how best to express those feelings, guided by Christian moral values.

The students reinforce their understanding of community and of the need for awareness of and care for others.

Grade Five

The Sacramental Life of the Church

Family Life Concepts:

The students discern the differences and similarities among families

The students learn about physical, mental and spiritual growth and the importance of good communication as they grow.

The students learn respect for their bodies and others and study God's plan of creation.

The students grow in their understanding of relationships and expressing love.

The students examine the family as an important social unit and look at way in which they can develop attitudes of responsibility toward others.

Grade Six

God's Plan of Salvation as recorded in the Bible

Family Life Concepts:

The students expand their understanding of the family's role in the development of their personalities; examine their own personalities, skills, talents and desires.

The students study the importance of showing respect for themselves and for all others, especially the elderly and evaluate their present position in society as they plan how to take their place in the community.

The students continue to explore the miracle of new life and continue to value life.

Grade Seven

A Synthesis of Catholic Beliefs, Part I: Trinity, Christian Community, Sacraments

Developing knowledge and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Family Life Concepts

The students examine their changing roles in the family unit and recognize the importance of showing love for each family member as they expand their sense of self-identity by understanding themselves.

The students will become aware of the importance of personal health and grooming and will address principals upon which to build healthy relationships as they deepen their awareness of the needs and rights of others in society and learn how to build more loving relationships.

Grade Eight

The Synthesis of Catholic Beliefs, Part II

The Church in the Modern World, Catholic Christian Morality, Ecumenism and Social Justice

Family Life concepts are not addressed as a separate subject in grades two and eight as they are included while focusing on sacramental preparation. All concepts of personal growth, respect for life, social living, self understanding are incorporated in the curriculum and should be reinforced at home.

The Curriculum for Religious Education is established by diocesan policy which includes both faith formation through classroom instruction and family faith formation through attendance at weekly mass.

Religion Texts Used

Grade 1-6 uses Be my Disciples, published by RCL-Benzinger

Grade 5/6 are presented with a Bible

Grade 7 use Be My Disciples, Life in Christ Jesus by RCL Benzinger, also use the Lectionary based weekly magazine, "Visions" by Pflaum Publications

To reinforce what has been taught in class or to supplement please visit the website established by the publisher: www.BeMyDisciples.com. The Saint Bartholomew Parish website at www.stbartseb.com also has additional resources for parents and catechists.

The curriculum is cumulative. The concepts taught in lower grades will be revisited and tested in the upper grades. Memorizing the Formal prayers is also the responsibility of each student. Periodic testing of the student's knowledge of prayers is to be expected.

Please be sure that students write their full names on the front cover of the textbooks as soon as they are distributed. This will ensure the return of any text books to the student who lost them. If a student needs to purchase a replacement text or a Bible, the fee is fifteen dollars.

Evaluation of Progress

Catechist are asked to inform the parents of the class's progress in January and then again in May. It is suggested that you prepare a letter to go home to the families informing them and updating them on what your class is accomplishing. You may also include a personal note of encouragement for each of your students on their individual letter that will go home to their parents. The goal is to promote parent involvement and hopefully encourage conversation about their Faith Formation. If there is a behavior issue or learning issue it is best to address it immediately through conference or a phone call to the parents.

Quizzes and tests can be given periodically at the catechist's discretion as one means of assessing student's content knowledge. Other assessment tools such as portfolios, journals, oral reports, projects, and /or assignments, may be useful for this task.

Fire Drills

There will be at least two fire drills scheduled during the year. The first one will be scheduled soon after school starts. You will receive full instructions at that time through the Catechist Memo, and an instruction sheet to keep in the front of your folder. Emergency exits are posted in each classroom.

In case of an emergency, the fire alarm pulls are located on the walls in each hallway. Fire extinguishers are located in glass cases on the walls at the end of the hallways.

Procedures for Fire Drills

Please emphasize the following very important safety points with the children:

1. Exit the building in **silence**, **single file** and always **walk**.
2. If you are separated from your class, find your teacher once you are **outside**.

If you are in another part of the building when the fire bell rings, leave by the closest door and **find your teacher once you are outside**.

Also,

Turn off the lights and close doors if possible.

The teacher/teacher aide should be the last one out of the classroom, and should remain with their class for the entire drill.

Walk straight back to the fence at the back of the parking lot, single file, turn and face the building.

******Please bring your Class Folder containing your Attendance Folder with you and check roll once you are outside.***

Room K118- Exit RIGHT through brown doors, walk LEFT to the fence

Room K119- Exit RIGHT through brown doors, walk LEFT to the fence

Room 101- Exit RIGHT to silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 103- Exit RIGHT to silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 102- Exit LEFT to brown doors, single file to the front lawn of the church

Room 104- Exit LEFT to brown doors, single file to the front lawn of the church

Room 105- Exit LEFT - left side of pathway, single file to the fence

Room 107- Exit LEFT - left side pathway, single file to the fence

Room 106- Exit RIGHT- right side of pathway, single file to the fence

Room 108- Exit RIGHT- right side of pathway, single file to the fence

Room 201- Exit, RIGHT- right side of stairway to the silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 203- Exit, RIGHT- right side of stairway to the silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 202- Exit, LEFT- left side of stairway to the silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 204- Exit, LEFT- left side of stairway to the silver doors, single file to the fence

Room 205- Exit, LEFT- left side of stairway, left on the pathway, single file to basketball court

Room 207- Exit, LEFT- left side of stairway, left on the pathway, single file to basketball court

Room 206- Exit RIGHT- right side of stairway, right on pathway, single file to basketball court

Room 208- Exit RIGHT- right side of stairway, right on pathway, single file to basketball court

Whenever the fire bell rings everyone must exit the building.

Lockdown

In the case of a lockdown, please be familiar with our plan of action. The purpose of the

lockdown is to ensure the safety of students and staff by avoiding direct contact/confrontation with an individual(s) or a situation that might present a danger. (See attached)

Permission Slips

If students are to leave the parish grounds for any type of trip, it is essential that the parents/guardians of each child complete a permission slip in advance. If the need arises, please see the DRE for such papers.

Prayer/Worship

Prayer should be at the heart of all we do as catechists. All class sessions should also begin with prayer. Establishing a ritual for your class is important.

Please incorporate scripture into the classroom experience whenever possible. Teach children how to meditate, or for young children, find their “heart room,” a spiritual place where they can be open and receptive to the voice of God. Catholic traditional prayers which are age-appropriate can be found in the back of the student books.

Focused visits to the church are still encouraged to help students develop a reverence for God and His House. We will make every effort to make the church available during class time for your use. It would be helpful to let us know of your plan to visit the church so we can be sure it is available and we can unlock the doors for you.

Formal Prayers by Grade

Grade 1

The Sign of the Cross- In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Our Father- Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary- Hail Mary, full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer to Guardian Angel- Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here. Ever this day, be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

Jesus Prayer- Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen

Grade 2

Prayer of Sorrow- Dear God, I am sorry for doing wrong. I know you love me very much. Help me to be a caring person. Help me to change and grow in your love. Amen

Act of Faith, Hope and Love- My God, I believe in you, I hope in you, I love you above all things, with all my mind and heart and strength. Amen.

Grade 3

Apostles Creed- I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, *(bow)* *who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary*, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

Grade 4

Act of Contrition-My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

Grade 5

The Rosary

Hail Holy Queen-Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life our sweetness, our hope. To you we cry, the children of Eve; to you we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this land of exile. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us; lead us home at last and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus: O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary

Fatima Prayer-*(is said after each decade of the rosary)* O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy.

Grade 6

Prayer to the Holy Spirit- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will

renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us choose what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Grade 7-8

Review of all the prayers learned in previous years.

Sacramental Policies

It is diocesan policy that students participate in a two years of classroom instruction in preparation for the reception of the Sacraments. It is our policy that students are not home-schooled in Sacramental years. It is important that our students prepare with their Catholic community.

Some students did not receive their sacraments at the “correct grade” and are preparing for their sacraments now. We have placed them in the age/grade appropriate level and want to be sure they are receiving their faith foundation. You will be informed if a student in your class is preparing for a sacrament so they will be sure to receive that extra care needed.

The home is the most important school, and parents are the most important teachers. Parents, by their vocation, have the obligation to develop the child given to them by God, physically, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. The role of the school is secondary and supportive.

Therefore, our sacramental program includes catechesis of both parents and children through our meetings, rituals and retreats.

Special Education Needs

All children are to be treated with respect and dignity within the classroom setting. In order for every child to do their best, special educational needs have been disclosed by the families. These needs are to be held in strictest confidence. Knowing about a child’s specific learning needs is a call to action for the DRE and the Catechists to maximize the child’s learning potential in the classroom. Classroom modifications that work best in a public school setting usually are most helpful in Religious Education as well. The best circumstance for any child is to have their parent and their teacher working together.

Catechists are in a unique position to determine if a classroom placement is appropriate for a particular child. Any Catechist who has concerns about a child’s placement should bring these concerns to the DRE.

Communication

It is our hope to provide you with all the support and resources that are available to us.

Communication is an important component of our program's success.

Each week we provide you with a Catechist Memo included in your attendance folder every week. The title "Catechist Connection" was named to reference our goal to keep you connected to the happenings in the Church and the Parish. Please read it before class starts every week; it contains information that you will need that day, as well as details for upcoming events.

Use of the Parish Website, www.stbartseb.com, is another way to stay connected to our Church. Our website is also a good resource for Catholic information that may be helpful in planning your class.

Emailing seems to be the most efficient method of communicating your needs and concerns. Please be sure when you contact us for a request we respond/acknowledge your email, this way we can be certain we are informed and prepared.

If for some reason you need to contact us and we are already in the school for class you can try to reach me on my cell phone, 908 227 9270. I will make every attempt to check for text messages, missed calls and voice mails.

Spirituality and Faith Formation

It is important that you set an example to your students by attending Mass and participating in worship opportunities. Through the year numerous opportunities are offered which we pass on to you through the diocese, our parish and the surrounding parishes. The Catholic Spirit, the newspaper of the Diocese of Metuchen also a great resource not only for your own spiritual development but for your own Faith Formation. You are encouraged to participate in continuing education, catechist certification and opportunities to strengthen your faith. This will only help make you a better catechist.