

# St. Michael Parish Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Handbook

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*"May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God  
and to the endurance of Christ".*

*-2 Thessalonians 3:5*



**Parish  
Religious  
Education  
Program**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

St. Michael Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) program is designed to provide religious instruction to the students (Grades K - 6) of the parish who do not attend Catholic schools. Students will learn how we, as Catholics, believe, how we worship in personal and liturgical prayer, and how to live a life of service to God. It is our aim that the students understand and experience the importance of Jesus Christ in daily life.

## **PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK**

This handbook is designed to answer parents' questions about St. Michael's CCD program. Please keep it as a guide and resource during your student's enrollment in the program.

## **CCD AT THE DIOCESEAN LEVEL**

### **Policies**

All Catholic schools and CCD programs within the Diocese of Lincoln operate within the guidelines set by the Office of Religious Education. With the Bishop's approval, the Office of Religious Education (ORE) sets guidelines to maintain consistency in all of the religious education programs throughout the Diocese. The following is a summary of the guidelines:

- Each parish in the Diocese of Lincoln will offer a catechetical program for students who are not attending a Catholic school with a minimum of forty hours of instruction. Each class session should last at least one hour and fifteen minutes.
- All Catholic schools and CCD programs follow the same curriculum. Each grade has specific goals, which include the knowledge of Catholic beliefs, worship, and morality.
- All Catholic schools and CCD programs use the same textbook series. The current required textbook series is *Faith and Life* by Ignatius Press.
- The ORE provides a list of prayers for memorization assigned by grade level.
- The sacramental preparation guidelines provided by the ORE include specific concepts and knowledge that a student is expected to learn. This includes the "92 Questions" for Confirmation preparation.

### **Levels of the Church's Ministry of the Word**

Various individuals carry out catechesis (teaching the faith). The following is a summary of these levels.

- The Bishop is the chief catechist and is responsible for providing sound catechesis to all people under his care. He does this by means of his own preaching and teaching

and by seeing that the necessary structures and programs exist to carry out the catechetical ministry.

- The Director of the ORE is appointed by the Bishop and responsible for implementing the programs and to provide the education and on-going formation of the catechists.
- The pastor is responsible for the organization and administration of the religious education programs in his parish, insuring that the guidelines and policies have been implemented.
- The coordinator(s) must have an overall view of the CCD program and will implement all ORE policies. The coordinator will provide leadership, recruit volunteers, train catechists, and be a liaison with the ORE.
- The catechist will plan, prepare, and teach the lessons according to the curriculum (textbook, prayers, doctrine, etc.). The catechist and the CCD program are to provide assistance and support to the parents in the religious education of the students.
- The parents are the **primary** teachers of their children, especially in the areas of religion. God gives the grace needed to fulfill the duty they assumed when they presented their children for baptism: training their children in the practice of the faith. All of the aforementioned levels support parents in this task.

### **Catechist Training**

Catechist Certification Program: The ORE offers course work to complete a certification program, Catechesis 101. The CCD teachers are required to complete the requirements for certification within their first year of teaching.

Background Checks: All volunteers are required to undergo a background check and complete the Safe and Sacred Training, a video about child abuse.

Additional Resources: The Diocese of Lincoln's (DOL) website has a wide variety of Catechist Resources including: periodic newsletters, Audio-Visual library, Christ Our Teacher podcasts, etc. The DOL also hosts an annual retreat for teachers at the Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House in Waverly.

### **Course Outline**

The following is a short summary of the material covered in the textbook in each of the grades 1 - 8.

Grade 1: *Our Heavenly Father* is a simple introduction to Bible stories and teachings of the faith. The text provides an introduction to the Trinity, with emphasis on the life of Jesus and acquaints the child with Mary, angels, and the saints.

Grade 2: *Jesus Our Life* is designed to prepare the child for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. Emphasis is placed on God's mercy and love. God cares for us and shows us how we can share that love. The children will prepare for and receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

*Blessed: First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion* has incredible content that meets children where they are and leads them, step-by-step, to where God is calling them to be.

Grade 3: *Our Life with Jesus* focuses on gaining an understanding that we belong to God's chosen people and that each of us is a child of God. Special emphasis is placed on God's law (Ten Commandments) and the importance of the Mass.

Grade 4: *Jesus Our Guide* is a study of God's plan of salvation, how we can participate in His plan, and the many ways that God helps us in our journey on earth to Heaven through His words, His law, and His Church.

Grade 5: *Credo: I Believe* shows us how we should worship God and how we should love and stay close to Him through the Mass, prayer, and the sacraments. Special emphasis will be placed on preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Grade 6: *Following Christ* is a blueprint for a life of love. Christ calls us to follow Him, especially in the Ten Commandments and the Holy Mass. This year's focus is on the challenges of God's law and His gifts of grace that help us to fulfill His law.

## **CCD AT ST. MICHAEL**

The CCD Program currently holds classes on Sundays at St. Michael School, 9101 South 78<sup>th</sup> Street. Classes are held weekly during the school year. Grades K – 6 will meet at the school from 9:15 - 10:45am. St. Michael's CCD Program currently meets or exceeds all guidelines and policies set by the Office of Religious Education.

### **Coordination**

The CCD Coordinator will set the calendar for the year, revise all curriculum materials, help with sacrament preparation, be in charge of any general information regarding the program and policies, be in charge of the class sessions, recruiting and training of volunteers, and complete any tasks associated with the weekly running of the program.

### **Policies**

We are constantly striving to provide the best CCD program for our students. The following policies have been set to help us reach our goal.

Student Conduct: Courtesy and respect for all people and respect for all property are expected at all times.

New Students: Students are encouraged to be registered at least three days prior to attending class. The Thursday deadline (for each Sunday class session) allows us to prepare for new student(s).

Arrival Times: Please arrive by 9:10am for a 9:15am start. All students should use the bell tower doors of the school to enter the building. **PLEASE BE PROMPT!**

Absent Students: Parents are asked to call the Coordinator at 402-540-1890 prior to class time when a student will be absent. Attendance will be taken. Parents of absent students (non-excused) will be contacted to ensure student safety.

Current Phone Numbers and E-Mail Addresses: Please inform the CCD Coordinator of any changes made during the school year.

Disruptive Students: Appropriate school behavior is expected at all times. A parent will be contacted if a student's behavior is disruptive.

Dismissal: Please make arrangements for your student as to how he/she is to get home after CCD classes (walk, ride, car pool, etc.). Students must be picked up promptly.

Snacks: Snacks will be provided on special occasions. Please keep all other snacks at home.

First Aid: Staff will be able to administer Band-Aids only. Be sure to update all contact and health information, as needed. In case of accident or serious illness, you will be contacted immediately. If you are unable to be reached, the CCD Program will take whatever necessary action is deemed necessary.

Parking Lot Safety Rules: **Safety of our students is a top priority.**

1. Park in the lot and walk to the building to pick up your child.
2. Always have the child enter/exit the car from the passenger side or cross over to the passenger side to avoid traffic.
3. Never drive across parking spaces.

## **Parent Communication**

Our program is designed to keep everyone informed of the many things that are happening in the CCD program and at St. Michael. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to call the teacher, coordinator, or the pastor.

Parent/Teacher Communication: If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us. We will contact you anytime during the school year if there are any problems or concerns with your child. You may also request a call or a conference at any time.

Notes Home: Notes or emails are sent at minimum once per month. Please ask your student for any notes each week.

## **Class Specifics**

This section will outline our basic policies for class related items.

Registration: Registration begins in late April for the following academic year. A completed form and payment is due prior to attending class. Tuition is waived for full-time teachers and aides.

Class Calendar: A calendar will be sent home at the beginning of each year. Notes will be sent home if any changes are made to the calendar.

Classroom Staffing: Each class will have a teacher and an aide. *All will have a background check completed by the parish and complete an online Safe and Sacred training.* All staff members are role models and are aware that their words and actions represent Christ and His Church. Our CCD staff consists of volunteers; please thank them for their time and efforts and pray for their needs.

Classroom Discipline: The staff is encouraged to use a positive discipline approach displaying respect for all students and staff members. Consistency, fairness, and a love for all students are our goal. Teachers are encouraged to use a series of “warnings” with increasing consequences. Although some of the consequences will vary by grade and teacher, they may include loss of privileges, time-out, staying after class, conference with the coordinator, and/or pastor and parental contact.

Homework: Homework may be necessary. Completion of the assigned homework is critical to a smooth class. Parents should make a determined effort to set aside a time each week for the student to complete homework assignments. Prayers are best learned by repetition and our class time is not sufficient, in most cases, to memorize them. Therefore, the bulk of prayer memorization will need to be done at home.

## **Sacrament Preparation**

The following is a general outline of our sacramental program. We will need a copy of your child’s baptismal certificate. If you have not yet provided us with a copy, please do so as soon as possible.

First Penance and First Holy Communion: Second grade students will receive these important sacraments. Most of the preparation will take place during class time. Parents will be provided with information at a parent meeting. Parental involvement in this preparation is essential.

An all-day retreat will be held prior to the First Communion ceremony.

For older students who need First Penance and/or First Holy Communion, please contact the Coordinator as each case is handled individually.

Confirmation: Students in fifth grade will receive the sacrament. A parent meeting is scheduled to discuss the sacrament, the ceremony, forms required by the parish and the Diocese, the retreat day, and other pertinent information.

Sacrament preparation will include learning about the sacrament, the ceremony, the Holy Spirit, lives of the saints, and a study of Church Doctrine (92 Questions). Students will be tested and an early start is recommended. Many of the materials, including the 92 questions, will be provided at the beginning of the year.

Students will also need to prepare a saint report and complete a 10-hour service requirement. Service hours can be completed in the community or the church. Our program does not approve specific work but relies on parental judgment. Parents must sign-off the work, thus indicating that the service hours were completed.

An all-day retreat will be held a few days prior to the ceremony.

For older students who need to be confirmed, please contact the Coordinator as each case is handled individually.

## **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Parents are the primary teachers and best role models for their children. Our CCD Program is provided to assist parents in the task of educating their children in our Catholic faith. The following outline will list specific parental behaviors that will provide the students with good role model behavior and support the efforts of the program.

Mass and the Sacraments: Attend Mass weekly and on Holy Days of Obligation and receive the sacraments regularly. Stress the importance of the sacraments, and show reverence for all things holy.

Attendance: Students should attend classes regularly. Parents should attend the sacrament meetings and the special events (Mass, Stations of the Cross, Rosary, etc.).

Prayers: Pray the prayers with your children. The easiest way to learn prayers is to pray them daily. A couple of minutes spent each day in prayer with your child will help him or her learn the assigned prayers quickly. This is as simple as praying a bedtime prayer or two together.

Homework: Set aside a specific time each week to do CCD homework. Spend this time (10-30 minutes) going over the assignment and talking about your faith with your child. Ask questions about what he or she is doing and learning.

Read Materials Sent Home: Read all notes sent home. Respond to information and action requested in the notes. Ask your child each Wednesday for any notes or information sent home.

Pray: Families are expected to pray for the success of the program and for our volunteers. Spiritual support through your prayers is needed for the continued success of the program.

Volunteer: Volunteers are needed in class, either teaching or as a classroom aide. If you are unavailable to help each week, consider volunteering to help occasionally to listen to prayers, help with a special project, or help with the retreat day. Volunteering to bring snacks for a special occasion and remembering the students and staff in your prayers can be a wonderful way to help the program.

Knowledge: Be a life-long learner of our faith. Attend a parish retreat, lectures or workshops offered in our parish or Diocese. Read the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or other religious books. Learn along with your child. Many of the topics the children are studying will be a good review or provide a new outlook for you! There is always more to learn about God and our relationship with Him.

Participating in any or all of the above ways will help you to be a good Christian role model for your child. It is important to remember that no one is perfect, and that by trying your best to communicate the importance of God in your life to your children and others around you, you will be fulfilling your duty to teach the practice of our faith and to share the Good News with others.

May God bless you and your family!

St. Michael CCD Program

