

Mother of Divine Providence Parish Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

2016-2017 Family Handbook



Official image of the 2015 visit of Pope Francis to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families. The Holy Family is pictured here in three generations: the child Jesus with his parents and grandparents.

Mother of Divine Providence Parish Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)

333 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406

**Wednesdays 6:15 – 7:30
September - May**

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Rev. Martin T. Cioppi, Pastor

Miss Lauren M. Joyce  
Director of Religious Education  
610-337-2173  
LJoyce@MDPparish.com

Snow closings: #1069 on KYW [www.kyw1060.com](http://www.kyw1060.com)

[www.mdpparish.com/prep/](http://www.mdpparish.com/prep/)

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## **MDP PREP Mission Statement:**

*Our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) fosters a desire for deeper understanding of faith and invites children, together with their families, to pray at home and in Worship. Our hope is for children to live their lives in Jesus Christ and to draw others to Him by their example.*

# Mass: Our weekly visit to God's house



**Jesus says, "Let the children come to me."  
He loves your child! Please bring them to Mass  
so they can learn to love Jesus in return!**

## Getting Started: Registration Basics

- Families should please register as MDP parishioners first before enrolling their children in PREP classes. Schedule a free registration appointment by calling the Parish Office at 610-265-4178.
- Some children, for serious reasons, attend PREP classes at a parish different from their family's parish of registration. That family must request a "letter of permission" from their pastor to attend PREP at MDP, and it must be submitted with the PREP Registration Form.
- In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, all children receive their sacraments (Reconciliation, Communion, Confirmation) in their parish of registration. An exception to this policy can only be granted by that child's pastor, and the family again must request a "letter of permission" with a **specific notation** about the sacraments in question and submit it with their PREP Registration Form.



## Baptismal Certificates

Before your child's First Reconciliation and/or Confirmation, we must have a copy of their Baptismal Certificate on file. Thank you!



## Communications

All families are responsible for the content of emails from the DRE (Lauren Joyce) and for the content of their child's folders home from the PREP program each week. Please pay attention to these memos!

## Arrival and Dismissal

Doors open for PREP staff at 5:15, and open to students at 6:00pm. PREP begins promptly at 6:15 – please make sure that your child is in the gym before that time! If your child is late and misses assembly, please park your car and escort them all the way to their classroom.

For dismissal, parents are welcome to gather in the school lobby during cold or inclement weather, as long as this does not disturb the students in their classrooms. The DRE reserves the right to revoke this policy if issues arise that inhibit student learning.

All adults will need to show a ***Driver's License*** at the classroom door to pick up their child. The adult's name should be listed as an "approved" driver on the Family Dismissal Card on file. **If a non-listed driver will be collecting your child on a given night, please send a written note to their catechist (not the DRE).** No child may walk home alone.

## **Police-Assisted Parking Management**

Please be aware that the Upper Merion PD have agreed to monitor our parking lot during dismissal and issue tickets to illegally parked cars, including cars in the handicap spots without proper tags. With over 150 families all using the parking lot at the same time, illegally parked cars cause serious congestion and endanger our children. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our parking lot safe!

## **Reception of Sacraments**

It is the policy at Mother of Divine Providence Parish that students continue their religious education uninterrupted through Confirmation, that is, that all students should attend Levels 1 – 6. Students who leave the program and return at a later age may have to complete missed levels, even if those levels differ from their grade in school. This decision ultimately rests with the DRE.

Preparation for First Holy Communion always takes at least two years. Even students joining the PREP program “late”, in later years, should expect to attend for two full years before making their First Holy Communion.

The DRE reserves the right to make exceptions or additional requirements to this policy in consultation with the MDP Pastor.





## **After Confirmation – Older Students**

After Confirmation, students are encouraged to join our 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade PREP class offered for six weeks in the fall and six weeks in the spring. Topics change each year and are announced a few months ahead of time.

Our parish also offers youth groups for students in 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades. These groups give students age-appropriate opportunities to grow in their faith and in service to God and others. Learn more at [www.mdpparish.com/youth-group](http://www.mdpparish.com/youth-group)



## Curriculum & Topics Covered

| Text Title                          | Catechism Quotes                                                                                                                                               | Things to Memorize                                                                                                                               | Prayers                                                                                                           | Textbook Themes                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1- God Loves Us                     | <b>Q. 150. Why did God make you?</b><br>A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. | Prayers →                                                                                                                                        | Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be                                                                | We belong to God, our parish, the church. God is our loving Father. We celebrate the sacraments and God's love.                         |
| 2 - Jesus Shares God's Life         | <b>Q. 574. What is a Sacrament?</b><br>A. A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace                                                    | 7 Sacraments, Act of Contrition                                                                                                                  | Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be                                                                | Jesus is the son of God. We celebrate the sacraments, especially penance and Eucharist.                                                 |
| 3 - We are the Church               |                                                                                                                                                                | 12 Bible time periods, 10 Commandments, 4 Marks of the Church                                                                                    | Morning Offering (or "Now I Wake to See the Light"), Guardian Angel Prayer                                        | (MDP - Bible timeline). We are the church, marks of the church, sacraments of the church, action of church in the world.                |
| 4 - God's Law Guides Us             |                                                                                                                                                                | 10 Commandments, 8 Beatitudes, 7 Corporal Works of Mercy, 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy                                                             | Morning Offering, Guardian Angel Prayer                                                                           | God's Law, 10 Commandments, Works of Mercy, Beatitudes                                                                                  |
| 5 - We Meet Jesus in the Sacraments | <b>Q. 574. What is a Sacrament?</b><br>A. A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace                                                    | Theological virtues (Ch 22), Cardinal Virtues, How to pray the Rosary, 20 Mysteries of the Rosary                                                | Apostle's Creed, Hail Holy Queen, St. Michael the Archangel (for the Rosary)<br>Bonus round: Divine Mercy Chaplet | The Sacraments                                                                                                                          |
| 6 - We Are God's People             |                                                                                                                                                                | 12 Bible time periods with one descriptive sentence per time period, Q&A facts for Confirmation, Holy Days of Obligation, Precepts of the Church | Come, Holy Spirit<br>To the Holy Spirit: St. Augustine                                                            | Old Testament - Jewish Covenants (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David)<br><br>Jesus gives us the New and Everlasting Covenant (Eucharist) |



## Bible Literacy Goals by Level

| Text Title                          | Bible Used                                                                          | Who Has One                                                         | Focus                                                                                                         | Students can Explain                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1- God Loves Us                     | <b>Beginner's Bible</b><br>Story-telling, simple format                             | One per catechist<br>Library set of 15                              | Story-telling<br><br>Major names & stories                                                                    | <b>Old T = Before J. is born</b><br><b>New T = After J. is born</b><br><b>God wants us to trust Him</b>                                                                                                                   |
| 2 – Sacrament Supplement to TCCB    | <b>The Catholic Children's Bible</b><br>Full text, easier translation with pictures | Each student issued their own bible, plus access to a classroom set | Story-telling<br><br>Major names & stories                                                                    | <b>Old T = Before J. is born</b><br><b>New T = After J. is born</b><br><b>God wants us to trust Him</b>                                                                                                                   |
| 3 - We are the Church               | <b>The Catholic Children's Bible</b><br>Full text, easier translation with pictures | Each student issued their own bible, plus access to a classroom set | 12 Periods of Bible Timeline                                                                                  | <b>12 Periods / Colors of Bible Timeline &amp; narrative thread of "God's people"</b><br><br>Old T = Before J. is born<br>New T = After J. is born<br>God wants us to trust Him                                           |
| 4 - God's Law Guides Us             | <b>The Catholic Children's Bible</b><br>Full text, easier translation with pictures | Each student issued their own bible, plus access to a classroom set | 12 Periods of Bible Timeline<br><br>Ability to find a Script. citation                                        | <b>12 Periods / Colors of Bible Timeline &amp; narrative thread of "God's people"</b><br><br>Old T = Before J. is born<br>New T = After J. is born<br>God wants us to trust Him                                           |
| 5 - We Meet Jesus in the Sacraments | <b>NAB Catholic Bible</b><br>Full text                                              | One per catechist<br>Each student owns a copy                       | <i>Next year: 12 Periods of BT</i><br><br>Ability to find a Script. Citation                                  | <b>Roots of each Sacrament in the Bible</b><br><br>12 Periods / Colors of Bible Timeline & narrative thread of "God's people"<br><br>Old T = Before J. is born<br>New T = After J. is born<br>God wants us to trust Him   |
| 6 - We Are God's People             | <b>NAB Catholic Bible</b><br>Full text                                              | One per catechist<br>Each student owns a copy                       | Find Script. Citation<br>Ability to relate Gospels to MY LIFE RIGHT NOW<br>The story of the Bible is MY STORY | The Bible is God speaking to ME in my life RIGHT NOW (esp. Gospels & New Test.)<br>How story of Bible Timeline is my story, too<br><br>Old T = Before J. is born<br>New T = After J. is born<br>God wants us to trust Him |

## Living the “Liturgical Year” Together

In addition to our textbook topics, our program focuses on living the “Liturgical Year” together as the People of God. This means celebrating the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. We also celebrate Holy Days and Feast Days with the children when appropriate. Catholicism is a way of life, not just a bunch of data to be learned... this is why our prayer and celebration together as a community is so important to what we do!

- Opening “Blessings & Books”
- Children’s Mass
- Thanksgiving Prayer Service
- Advent Candles & Carols
- Vocations Guest Speakers
- Ash Wednesday Prayers & Traditions for Lent
- Living Stations of the Cross
- Holy Week & Easter
- Closing Mass & May Procession



## Homework Assignments

Each catechist decides how much, if any, homework is best for their class. Special projects or interactive trips may also be assigned. Please check with your child’s catechist for details.

## **Lost Books, Youcats, and Bibles**

Lost Sadlier workbooks cost \$30 to replace. Lost Ascension Press materials (Bible Timeline, Confirmation) cost \$25.

Students in Level 2 will receive a full-color “Catholic Children’s Bible” that they should use for Levels 2-4. This book costs \$35 to replace!

Students in Level 5 will receive a YouCat and new Bible that they will use for both Levels 5-6. Replacement copies can be purchased for \$15 per Bible and \$20 per YouCat.

## **Progress Reports**

Are sent home at mid-year and end-of-year. Please sign and return the mid-year report!

## **PREP Student Behavior**

We are very proud of our students, and are delighted to see the considerate and respectful ways in which they treat themselves, their teachers, and their peers. Our PREP students are expected to:

- Attend weekly Mass with their family
- Pray a few moments each day, telling God their joys and struggles
- Be patient and kind with fellow classmates
- Be respectful when speaking to staff and adults
- Use appropriate language, including respecting God’s name
- Complete homework assignments on time
- Leave the desk they borrow during class exactly the way they found it! (Please do not touch anything inside the desks – those materials and pencils do not belong to us!)
- Bring their folders home for parents to read each week.

Gum, toys, food, and electronics are not permitted in class. Cell phones must be off and out of sight! Cell phones may only be used to call late drivers at dismissal time. If issues arise, these prohibited items (including cell phones) may be taken from the student and returned to the parent after class.

## **No Food at PREP**

For the safety of our students with life-threatening food allergies, there is a strict “no food” policy at PREP.

## **Dress Code**

Please have your children dress in clean, neat-looking clothing. Inappropriate slogans or logos are not permitted, and modest clothing is expected.

For days we are in church, please help your children dress in a special manner, as they would for Sunday Mass. Children are very sensitive to cues like dress code – special clothing helps them understand that this is a special event!

Please send your child with a **coat** on nights we are in Church! It gets cold and rainy on our walk up the hill!



## Attendance & Absentee Policy

Archdiocesan policy considers more than 3 absences in a year to be excessive. This would be equivalent to a child missing a full month of weekday school.

Excessive absences may jeopardize a child's readiness to receive a Sacrament and their advancement to the next class level. An age-appropriate project, in addition to class work missed, may be assigned by the Director of Religious Education.

Please email to report absences to Lauren Joyce at [LJoyce@MDPparish.com](mailto:LJoyce@MDPparish.com). Please send a note to the catechist the following week explaining what happened. An excused absence will be given for serious reasons beyond the family's control, e.g. hospitalization, death in the family.

Make-up work assigned by the catechist is to be returned the following week. Please help your child catch up.

**Sports.** Please do not let your child miss class because of sports! CYO sports teams are not allowed to practice during PREP times. If your child is on a non-CYO team that has practices and games on Wednesday nights, please contact the DRE for a copy of the "coach's letter" to submit to your coach.



**Early pick-up** is strongly discouraged for the safety of our children. If you have a serious reason or a family emergency that necessitates picking up your child before dismissal, please come to the front desk and use the log to sign your child out. You will need to show your Photo ID at the front desk and again at the child's classroom.

## **Awards & Certificates**



### **End of Year Recognition**

Attendance Certificate – given to all students who complete the year  
Perfect Attendance – given to students with perfect attendance!  
Faithful Attendance – given to student with only one or two absences  
Disciple Affirmations – give to each student by their catechist, as an affirmation of that child's gifts and talents from God

*(Students in level 5 and above may become altar servers!)*



## **New PREP Students Older than Level 1**

If your child is older than the typical student in Level 1 (age 6-7) and would now like to begin their religious education, the DRE will work with your family to develop a plan for your child that balances “catch-up” work with the ability to join students of the same age. A variety of options may be considered: starting the child in Level 1, allowing “catch-up” work to occur at home, tutoring in addition to standard classes, etc. For the child to catch-up with his/her peers, the family will have to work hard to make up the missing years of education.

“Readiness” will determine the timing of the reception of the sacraments! Readiness is judged by the DRE using the criteria of the child’s expressed desire for the sacraments, the family’s demonstrated commitment to celebrating the faith at home and at weekly Mass, and the mastery of relevant faith knowledge.

Two years of consecutive religious education are expected prior to the reception of any sacraments.



## **Children With Special Needs**

Our PREP Program does its best to provide for children of all abilities. Children with cognitive, sensory, physical or social disabilities are warmly welcome and encouraged to attend weekly classes. Please call the DRE to develop a personalized plan for your child: 610-337-2173.

If your child needs special attention or accommodations in class, please let us know! We are honored to partner with you in caring for your precious children. Please equip us with the information we need to best work with your child in classroom and liturgical settings.

All such information you provide to us will be kept confidentially by the DRE and staff members in your child's classroom.

## **Custody Information**

If there is a legal custody arrangement for your child(ren), we must have a copy of the latest court documents on file.

If there are individuals who are legally prohibited from contact with your child, PLEASE let us know! We need to have this information to keep your child safe!

Absences due to custody issues will be assessed individually. Please arrange a meeting with the DRE if this applies to you. The custodial parent is responsible to teach missed lessons. In all custody cases, a copy of the *most recent* custodial court order must be on file in our office.

In compliance with the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment) non-custodial parents may request a copy of the progress report unless there is a court order in effect denying access to the student.

If your family has experienced separation and/or divorce, you know personally how this pain can impact both you and your child. Please let us know if there is any way we can help your family through this difficult time – whether that be recommending support resources for you or your children, making accommodations for children with multiple caregivers, or by arranging a meeting with the pastor to

begin thinking about applying for an annulment. Issues surrounding separation, divorce, and child custody impact our families deeply. Let us walk with you through this difficult time – please give the DRE a call if we can help in any way.

## **Weather & Emergency Closings**

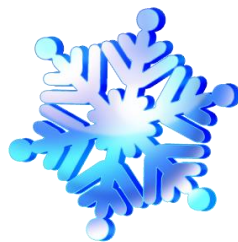
We're on KYW! Listen to the radio or [www.kyw1060.com](http://www.kyw1060.com) for closings.

- Our PREP KYW number is #1069
- The Mother Teresa of Calcutta building number is #340
- If the Upper Merion school district closes, we're closed too!

Please monitor your email if closings seem likely. An email will be sent if a decision is made to close for the evening (unless the Wifi and electricity are down.)

Every precaution will be taken to ensure the safety of the children while they are on Mother of Divine Providence property. In case of sudden severe weather, or in the event of a local or national emergency we will attempt to notify parents to pick up their children *if it is safe*, or we will *shelter in place* temporarily until it is deemed safe to dismiss the children.

In these situations we count on your understanding, cooperation and support of any decisions that are made by the Pastor and Director of Religious Education or their delegate.



## Emergency Plans & Drills

The MDP PREP program takes the safety of our students very seriously. We have emergency plans in place for Lockdown, Fire, and other relevant situations. These plans have been constructed with guidance from Archdiocesan and law enforcement professionals. Please be in touch if you have any questions.

We will have at least one fire drill per year. If there is a serious reason that your child should not be part of this drill, please let the DRE know.

If your child needs to carry and use an Epi-Pen, it is **your** responsibility to send one in their backpack every week. Please show your child's catechist where it is kept in the backpack, and share any relevant information on when to use it. (Eg. Symptoms your child would show, etc)

### Visitors to the building

For the safety of our children, all visitors in the building must please report to the front desk and sign in!

## Protecting God's Children

**We are committed** to the safety of your children, and thoroughly screen our paid and volunteer staff in the following ways.

All adult staff (paid & volunteer) are required to pass:

- PA State Police background check
- *Childline* Child Abuse background check
- FBI Fingerprint Checks (or a Disclosure Statement for those residing in PA for the last 10 years)

All adult staff (paid & volunteer) complete the following trainings:

- Archdiocesan "Protecting God's Children" workshop

- Signed agreement to the ministerial standards set forth by the US Bishops
- Mandated Reporter Training

These documents are on file at the parish and are checked periodically by Archdiocesan and national auditors.

Parents are encouraged to consider attending the informational “Protecting God’s Children” workshop offered periodically. This workshop will also count as one of the clearances needed for working with children.

**In class**, your child will receive a basic lesson in January on safety, focused on the message “say no, run away, tell a trusted adult.” Preview your child’s lesson at <http://archphila.org/catechetical/resources/resources>. You may pull your child out of class for this lesson if you are not comfortable with the topic- please submit a note.

**These lessons are effective**, as demonstrated by the brave children who have reported abusive situations after being given the encouragement to speak up if they are being harmed.

## **Discipline**

Please know that if a child is disruptive or in some way causing a disciplinary problem, he / she will be appropriately corrected. Our purpose is to help the child learn that he / she must act respectfully and responsibly toward self, others and other people's property.

For repeated disruption in class or other behavioral issues, a child will be brought to the DRE. The DRE may choose to contact the Parent/ Guardian if this seems to be helpful to the child. In some cases, a meeting with parent, child, catechist and DRE will afford the best opportunity to help a child. Sometimes it is necessary for the

Parent / Guardian to be present in the classroom during class. This will be decided during the conference. In extreme disciplinary situations, temporary or permanent suspension from the PREP program may be required.

## **Bullying and Violent Behavior**

The MDP PREP program strives to create the safe, secure and respectful educational environment that our students deserve to learn about their faith, develop Christian behavior and build relationships with God and others.

The following actions are unacceptable both on the Christian level of being called to love others, as well as on the basic human level of respect and concern for our neighbor.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting someone cruelly
- Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip
- Using technology to harm others physically, emotionally, or socially (cyberbullying, gossip, etc)

If the MDP PREP staff becomes aware of such actions occurring in our program or among our students, quick and appropriate action will be taken. Such actions may include students being called to the office so that “their side” of the story may each be heard, parents being notified, appropriate disciplinary action being taken with the

notification of the parents. Our goal is to make it clear that respect and courtesy are the foundation of a Christian society – bullying and violence will not be tolerated in any way. The disciplinary response will match the severity of the offence – consequences for bullying and violence may include suspension or dismissal from the PREP program in serious cases.

If a student experiences or witnesses bullying at any time, they are to please tell a member of the staff so that the situation can be addressed.

In serious situations, the pastor will be promptly notified.

If there is reason to suspect physical danger to a student or the PREP program, law enforcement will be notified.

*Speak with your student often about bullying. The “third party” in bullying is neither the bully nor the victim, but the onlooker. This onlooker has the choice to stand up for the victim, or become complicit with the bully by their silence. Encourage your child to become the kind of person who stands up for those being bullied!*



## **Contraband – Search and Seizure**

Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, and weapons of any kind. It is both unlawful for minors to be in possession of them, and forbidden on MDP Church and MTC School property.

It is the policy of Mother of Divine Providence to respect the privacy of its participants. Unnecessary intrusions into persons and possessions are to be avoided.

However, in the event that a student is suspected of having contraband in his / her possession, the Director of Religious Education will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness. Law enforcement may be notified in serious situations.

## **Property Damage**

In the event of property damage (accidental or deliberate), the students involved (and thus, their parents) will compensate for the damage. This includes but is not limited to damage of program books and materials, damage to the classroom, classroom items, or Smartboard, and damage to the school or church property





In closing, please let me say “thank you” for all of the ways that you commit to making PREP part of your family faith journey! May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph watch over us all this year and always!

Sincerely,  
Lauren Joyce, Director of Religious Education