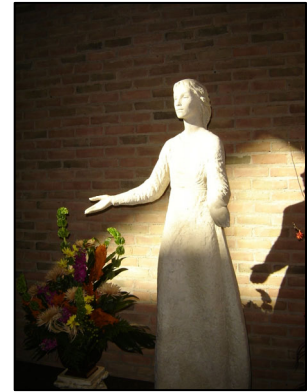


## St. Mary Religious Education Commission: Religious Education Program

Revised on June 15, 2009

**2012 Mission:** The Religious Education Commission builds on the foundation of our children's faith in partnership with their parents. Drawing from the life of Jesus, our young people and their families are enabled to become active members of St. Mary Parish. Our catechetical team, supported by an engaging curriculum, educates and forms our children in the strong traditions of our Catholic faith, prepares them to receive the sacraments, encourages life-long service to the community, and inspires our families to be alive in the practice of their faith. Through this process of sharing our faith with our young people and their families, our catechists further develop their own faith and relationship with God in the community of his Church.



**Vision for 2014:** The excited children are entering the building for a new year of Religious Education in the year 2014. The on-line registration was very convenient. The newly developed system of e-mailing queries to teachers and staff is making parents feel more connected to the program. Enthusiastic, staff-supported, optimistic catechists are there to welcome the students, anticipating their mission to teach as Jesus did. Clamoring to begin a new year on their faith journey, the eager, bright-eyed, students are astonished at the technology awaiting them. The projectors/computers available for all classes plus the class size of 13 students make learning fun and enjoyable.

Our DRE creatively developed programs to include a spiritual experience for his/her catechists. He/she believes that the children are our greatest assets; therefore he/she wants to give each and every one the educational and spiritual experiences necessary for them to have a similar understanding of Catholicism as a five-day student. Catechists who are teaching children with special needs are well-trained reaping benefits for all.

Because of catechists' excellent training and a well organized program, the classes have many activities that make learning interesting. Children are enthusiastic in their discussions about the homily they heard last Sunday. Many are actively involved in preparing and participating in the Liturgy. The service opportunities available to the students and their parents are numerous, and these enrich them and their families.

When the bell rings signaling the end of class, the group is astonished that time flew by so quickly. The students thank their catechist and say they are looking forward to their next class. They leave in an orderly fashion going forth to proclaim their newfound knowledge to their parents who are very grateful for such an inspiring program.

**Former Vision for 2008:** The Religious Education Program is committed to the following goals: We will zealously promote the knowledge of the Catholic Faith and its practice in the daily lives of our students and their families, so that our students may grow up to be active and involved Catholics. Especially through our sacramental preparation programs, we will invite all our families to renew their faith in Jesus Christ and commit themselves to more active participation in the life of their parish. We are committed to providing a continuing quality program of religious education to all the children of our parish community, so that all of our students will complete eight consecutive years of religious education without interruption, as the foundation for life-long growth in faith and religious practice. In order to provide for quality instruction of our students, our regular Catechists will be fully certified through the Diocese of Joliet, and more recent Catechists will have their certification plans in place as part of their initial formation program. We will increase the retention rate of our Catechists, and promote a waiting list of Catechists willing to teach when openings occur through ongoing catechist recruitment and development programs, so that we might always have well-trained Catechists. We will increase the number of volunteers who are willing to serve as Catechist Assistants and Office Assistants through new recruitment efforts in the general parish community and within the families of our religious education students, so that our Catechists may be duly supported in their teaching efforts. We will promote and increase the number of religious education families participating in parish programs (such as the Advent, New Year's, and parish Family Festivals; as well as the Advent and Lenten Family Reconciliation Penance Services) as part of our wider parish community of faith. We will help our Youth Ministry program increase the number of eighth graders who join the high school Youth Ministry program through new recruitment efforts that welcome these confirmed Catholics into the life of our parish.