



# Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish

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## Religious Education Department

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## HANDBOOK

For Paid and Volunteer  
Religious Education Staff  
And Youth Ministry

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## **Parish Mission Statement**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Parish is a faith-filled community for all cultures and ages dedicated to building the Kingdom of God. We come closer to God by following Jesus Christ through His Word and Sacraments. Through the Holy Spirit and with the intercession of our Blessed Mother, we provide a sense of belonging to all God's people through prayer, service and sharing of our gifts for the praise and glory of God.

## **RE & FF Mission Statement**

Our baptism calls us to share in Christ's mission. As catechists and youth ministers, we respond to a call to put people not only in touch but in communion with Jesus Christ. Only He can lead us to the love of the Father in Spirit. At the origin of the Catechist's vocation ... is a specific call from the Holy Spirit, a "special charism recognized by the Church" (Taken from *"Echoes of Faith"* – the Catechist, NCCL 1996)

"To teach as Jesus did, means calling and equipping all Christians of every age and stage of life to fulfill their baptismal call to holiness in the family, Church and society – the mission to evangelize and transform the world into a more caring and just society. Ongoing faith development is essential to accomplish this mission; it does not end at Confirmation or graduation but continues until one's death." (Taken from *"Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States"*, USCC 1999).

## **General Directory for Catechesis**

"Formation seeks to enable catechists to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ" (General Directory for Catechesis #235).



## **Role of the Catechist**

We seek to be examples of the presence of God through worship, education, and service. Some of the basic ideal qualities of catechists are:

- Responsive to a call. Our call is to teach others the necessity of continued personal growth in faith and Christian living.
- Witness to the Gospel. To be “witness” requires the catechist to develop a regular prayer life and to study Scripture and Catholic doctrine in a reflective way. Catechist’s personal life choices should be in alignment with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Committed to the Church. The catechist realizes that the Lord works and the Holy Spirit moves through Church authority.
- Shares in Christian community. The catechist participates in the sacramental life of the Church and encourages those to whom they minister to do the same.
- A servant of the community. Establishing God’s Kingdom is in loving service to all God’s people without distinction.
- Develops the needed knowledge skills and abilities. This includes Catholic doctrine, Scriptures, catechetical methodology, spiritual growth and development.

## **Guidelines for Teaching Religion**

### **Class Planning:**

1. Follows the diocesan curriculum guidelines for Grades Pre-K through Grade 12
2. Leads students in prayer in the classroom
3. Uses textbooks, manual and materials approved by the diocese and parish
4. Lessons and activities are taught according to the liturgical year

### **Classroom Management:**

1. Arrives, at minimum, 15 minutes before class begins.
2. Notifies the DRE in advance, when there is a need to be absent, and makes sure lesson plans are available for the substitute.
3. Arranges teaching areas to help learning to take place.
4. Has a prayer area in the classroom, and uses a variety of prayer styles and experiences.
5. Has all needed materials and equipment arranged for and prepared before class.

### **Classroom Discipline:**

1. Has a firm but kind rule of discipline. Students need to understand the classroom and program rules and consequences of their behavior. Be a model of proper grooming and dress.
2. Catechists are responsible for classroom order, safety and Christian learning.
3. Students that require constant discipline will be sent to the DRE. If the problem continues, the family will be contacted; this may result in a request that the child leave the program.

### **Student Attendance:**

1. Catechist must keep formal, weekly attendance of all students.
2. If a student is absent for three consecutive weeks, the catechist will call the home for follow-up.
3. Sacramental preparation classes are important. If there is a continued lack of attendance (i.e. 3 classes), the student may be advised to wait to receive the sacrament at a later time. Previous to this decision, there will be communication between the Pastor, DRE and family.

## Catechist Requirements

Lead catechists and youth ministers should possess a minimum high school diploma or its equivalent.

### **Certification:**

1. As a catechist, you will be expected to work on and maintain your Diocesan Certification. Certification consists of three levels:
  - **Track I** – requires seven course units. This track should be completed within three years from start/hiring date.
  - **Track II** – introductory courses in teaching methods for Grades Preschool through high school and adult learners. Track I completion is not required for participation in Track II
2. Ongoing formation certification – a variety of course offerings to promote life-long formation in faith. Two ongoing formation courses every three are required to maintain certification.
3. As a catechist, you will be evaluated annually by the DRE/CRE. You will also be asked to evaluate the DRE/CRE and give feedback regarding the program. ([ Note: once this Handbook is approved by the parish, all catechist will be bound by the Handbook. Evaluation forms are in the design stage.)

### **Concerning Child Abuse (Safe Environment Program)**

The “Policy on Allegations and Incidents of Sexual Misconduct” promulgated by the Diocese of Honolulu is incorporated in this Handbook by reference. A copy of the policy is contained in the handbook “To Offer Healing, To Restore Trust”, first published on January 8, 2004. The handbook is available from the parish’ Office of Religious Education.

The Church endorses the mandatory reporting provisions of H.R.S. Chapter 350 concerning child abuse and requires that paid and volunteer staff be familiar with the provisions of the chapter, which is summarized in the Handbook. The Church encourages paid and volunteer staff to report suspected child abuse to the Religious Education Program Director or Pastor, who should contact the police.

All adults who have significant contact with minors are required to attend the Diocesan Safe Environment Initial Training class within sixty (60) days from the official start date of their assigned duties. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to register for and attend the class.

The Code of Conduct Agreement, as outlined in “To Offer Healing, To Restore Trust” includes the following statement as a condition of providing services to the children and youth of our diocese:

**I will:**

- **Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.**
- **Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities;**
- **Use positive reinforcement, rather than criticism, negative competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth;**
- **Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the Pastor or Administrator;**
- **Report suspected abuse to the Pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a petty misdemeanor;**
- **Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.**

**I Will Not:**

- **Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.**
- **Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.**
- **Use, possess or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.**
- **Pose any health risk to children and/or youth [i.e. no fevers or other contagious situations]**
- **Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.**
- **Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.**
- **Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner**
- **Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth**
- **Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.**

**I understand that as a person working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a background check to the full extent of Hawaii state law. I understand that any action inconsistent with the Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal from working with children and/or youth.**

## **Religious Education and the Law**

Catechists are required to attend the Diocesan classes on:

- Religious Education and the Law - CC 105
- Religious Education's Response to Child Abuse – CC 106

It is expected that the catechist will read the documents on these topics. Catechists are required to sign the compliance form verifying that they understand the materials, have completed the classes, and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct Policy.

## **Guidelines for Emergency and First Aid Information**

1. Catechists should select two students or an adult aide who will go to the office for assistance when one of the students is hurt or becomes ill in the classroom.
2. There is a First Aid Kit in the office for cuts, scratches, burns, or bites.
3. Catechists are not permitted to administer any type of medication to students. If a child becomes ill, remember to stay with the sick child. Remain with the class and send for help. Do not leave the class unattended.
4. Each catechist should have available or access to an accident report form to be filled out when the need arises.
5. Catechists are expected to evaluate the classroom area upon notice of fire, bomb threats, or other emergencies. Children are to be led to a designated safe zone using the route established by authorities. In the event that the established route is inaccessible or presents a danger, catechists should use their best judgment.
6. In an emergency, catechists should make sure that no one is left behind and that windows and doors are closed. Safety demands that one catechist or adult aide should be the last person out of the room. After the evacuation of the building in an emergency, catechists must account for all students. The attendance log should be in their possession.
7. In case of emergency, catechists may be required to check parent/guardian driver's licenses before releasing any student.
8. Catechists are expected to remain with students until the all clear is given by proper authorities.
9. There will be posted, distributed fire drill plans, evacuation plans as well as the designations of "safe area".



## Accident Report Form

Name of Parish: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish  
Address: 91-1004 North Road, Ewa Beach, Hawaii 96706  
Tel. 808-689-8681/689-1471

Name of person completing form: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Class : \_\_\_\_\_  
Room/location where accident of injury occurred: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of adult responsible for supervision: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of accident or injury \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Description of accident or injury \_\_\_\_\_

Description of medical treatment, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Were the parents/guardian called? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Did the student need to be taken to the hospital? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Was a copy of the report given to the parents? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not?

List names and contact numbers of witnesses as appropriate:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Signature of Supervising Adult \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of DRE/CRE \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies of report to: Parents/Guardians  
Student File  
Office  
Pastor – in case of serious injury

## **A Final Thought**

As partners in the Religious Education Ministry in the parish, a catechist has a special role in building up the kingdom of God. Common sense and prayer are aides in effective ministry. There will be guides that will meet the demands of the law and the Gospel. Cardinal John Newman wrote, "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." You can be a successful catechist if you work at it. Trust in your own abilities and let Jesus be your model.

## **References**

Religious Education and the Law: A Catechist Handbook	Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN
To offer Healing, To Restore Trust	Diocese of Honolulu Handbook for Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments.
Working Smarter, Not Harder: A Survival Guide for Catechists	Thomas P. and Rita Tyson Walters
Do's and Don't's: Catechists Working with Children	Cecilia P. Regan, National Pastoral Life Center
"Bearers of the Light" Certification Programs	Diocese of Honolulu, Office of Religious Education

**Paid and Volunteer Religious Education Staff Acknowledgement Form**

This is to acknowledge that I/We have received/read the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Handbook for Paid and Volunteer Religious Education Staff. I/We understand and agree to cooperate with the parish policies set forth in the handbook.

Print LEGAL Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paid and Volunteer Religious Education/Youth Ministry Staff Member

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian if staff member is a minor)

**Paid and Volunteer Religious Education Staff Safe Environment Re-Certification**

(The undersigned) by my signature indicate the following:

- I have read and understood the VIRTUS Code of Pastoral Conduct material
- I have read and understood the Diocesan Guidelines for Sexual Misconduct
- I agree to abide by all the guidelines, principles, and laws presented in the Code of Pastoral Conduct, the Diocesan Guidelines for Sexual Misconduct, and the instructions and principles presented in this training.

Print Legal Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address (no P.O. Box) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years at the above residence: \_\_\_\_\_

*If the above address has not been your residence for at least five (5) years, please provide other addresses and the number of years of residence below)*

Mailing Address (if difference from above: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. (home) \_\_\_\_\_ cell \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Office Use Only:**

**Completion of Workshop Training Certified by:**

I certify that the above-mentioned person has satisfactorily completed the requirements for re-certification.

Date of Re-Certification: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name of Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_