



PREP Handbook

Our Lady of Guadalupe Roman Catholic Church
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Roman Catholic Church
Parish Religious Education Program
PREP Handbook**

This handbook contains certain policies and procedures for Our Lady of Guadalupe's Parish Religious Education Program. The program ("OLG PREP") may change any of its policies and procedures as needed and apply them as circumstances dictate.

In the event of such a change, parents will be given prompt notification and provided with an addendum if necessary.

Questions about a particular policy or procedure may be addressed to the program director.

Students and Parents must accept and abide by the policies and procedures contained in this handbook in order to serve in ministry with OLG PREP.

Revised July 25, 2025

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Parish Identity and Program Vision & Philosophy

Mission Statement of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Buckingham

Embarking on a journey of new beginning, we the faithful of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, affirm our Judeo-Christian tradition and our Roman Catholic faith in communion with Our Holy Father, our Archbishop, and our parish clergy.

We commit ourselves to:

- Worship God through the sacramental, liturgical, and devotional life of our parish – especially the celebration of the Eucharist;
- Build a parish community that will cultivate the virtues of faith, hope and love;
- Provide ongoing formation in our faith through education and evangelization;
- Embrace stewardship of time, talent, and treasure as a way of life in the service of all our sisters and brothers.

We pray to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, as we endeavor to reflect the light of Jesus Christ that shines before God's people.

About the Program

OLG PREP offers two basic approaches to religious education: an evening classroom setting taught and administered by volunteer catechists, and a home-based parent-led formation called Family Catechesis. Families are welcome to discern which program best meets their current circumstances.

Sacramental Preparation

The Church believes that the sacraments are what welcome and sustain us in our belonging to the One Body of Christ. As such, all religious education is also sacramental preparation, making participation in our curriculum essentially at every grade level. More specifically, however, sacramental preparation takes place during a few dedicated years. Children in the second grade will make their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, while students in the 8th grade will prepare for the reception of Confirmation. Exceptions can be made based on membership in other rites (e.g., Byzantine Catholics). Families transitioning to full membership in the Catholic Church or coming from otherwise unusual sacramental situations and timelines are invited to contact the program director to learn more about how we can best serve you on your journey to full participation in the life of faith of the Roman Catholic Church.

Sacramental Eligibility and Baptismal Certificates

The parish itself exists in order to aid the Church in her task of bringing about the salvation of souls. Proper reception of the sacraments is essential to this missionary task of the Church. PREP is no exception to that missionary demand. However, proper reception necessitates proper disposition to receive the sacraments. Ordinarily, this program requires students to be enrolled for two years prior to the reception of the age-appropriate sacrament. Exceptions will be made on a case by case basis, but nevertheless exceptions prove the rule, i.e., proper disposition to receive First Holy Communion entails the preparation that comes with 1st and 2nd grade PREP, and the

proper disposition to receive the sacrament of Confirmation comes by attendance throughout the whole program, but at a minimum the 7th and 8th grade years of the program.

Baptismal Certificates

All students in PREP are required to have their baptismal certificate on file at the OLG office; this is doubly important for students who were baptized at parishes other than OLG.

Student with Special Needs

Parents of children with special needs, disabilities, and certified IEP's are invited to disclose that information to the program director and other parish officials in order that we may better accompany these children according to their needs. This may take the shape of a more individualized or private curriculum, reception of the sacraments, placement with specially qualified personnel, etc.

Homeschool Program

Families have the option of registering for Homeschool Religious Education for Grades 1,3,4,5, 6 and 7. The program is self-paced, with the parent working with their child or children throughout the year on one chapter per week in the grade level textbook. All Completed student workbooks are due by May 31st at the end of the PREP school year.

Families choosing the Homeschool option are required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to achieve Basic Catechetical Certification. The certification program is a series of 10 videos provided by Loyola Press. In addition, Homeschool Families are required to follow the Archdiocesan Grade Level Guidelines. Families choosing the Homeschool option will receive the above information from the parish DRE.

*Please note the Homeschool option is not available for Sacrament Grades 2 and 8.

Policies and Procedures

PREP is held every Monday and Tuesday evening from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m. at Cold Spring Elementary for students enrolled in the classroom program in grades 1 through 6.

The 7th grade class meets every Monday in the Saint John XXIII Social Hall from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.

The 8th grade class (Confirmation) meets every Tuesday in the Saint John XXIII Social Hall from 6:15-7:30 p.m. Additional retreats and practices are mandatory (TBD, sponsors are required to attend Confirmation practice).

While PREP recognizes the difficulty in scheduling various appointments, the scheduling of doctor and other appointments should not be made during program hours except for cases of emergency, in which case the parent agrees to complete any missed work and lessons at home. See “Student Absences” for details on parental expectations with regard to missed classes.

Late arrivals or early dismissals due to medical appointments are strongly discouraged, and early dismissals due to extracurricular or sports related activities are not permitted.

Arrival Procedures

Please note, for the safety of our students and staff, and to comply with the Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, parents are not permitted to enter the school building outside of the arrival time (6:15 – 6:30 pm) unless on official business with the program.

Custody Policy

OLG PREP will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the program director with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. The Program will request these documents at the time of registration. If either the Custodial Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the revised document to the program director immediately. This is also true in the event that such an agreement is issued after the time of enrollment. In the absence of such documentation the program will and must assume that parents share legal custody.

Our program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official and the latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the parish program expects the cooperation of both parents, especially in regard to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

Dismissal

Unauthorized adults (which includes parents and guardians) are not permitted to enter the school building outside of dismissal time (7:25 – 7:30) for the safety of our students and staff. Adherence to the dismissal procedures outlined below will help to allow all students to exit the building in a safe, orderly, and timely manner.

Enrollment

Ordinary enrollment in the program will be from grades 1 through 8. For families who transfer to OLG from another parish, ordinarily letters of satisfactory progress from will need to be provided to the director.

For students who, for whatever reason, drop from enrollment and re-enroll years later, arrangements will have to be made for their satisfactory disposition to re-enter with their current grade level. These decisions are made at the discretion of the program director. Older students who have not received prior religious instruction will be accompanied in a more individualized manner, whether through an adapted RCIA approach, or through seasonal “catch-up” work and private meetings with the program director, catechist, or parish priest.

Atypical enrollments may affect sacramental preparation. Our standard for OLG PREP is for two years of enrollment prior to sacramental preparation, i.e., 1st and 2nd grade, 7th and 8th grade. Reception of sacraments may be deferred to later years at the discretion of the program director in view of the student not being properly disposed for the reception of the sacrament.

Lateness

Late arrivals are discouraged. PREP arrivals begin at 6:15 pm for grades 1 – 6 at Cold Spring Elementary and extend no later than 6:30 pm. Recurring and serial lateness will affect program attendance, and therefore proper education and disposition for the sacraments. Eligibility for promotion to the next grade level may also be affected by chronic lateness.

Proper Supervision

As a general rule, the duty of care owed to our students is a standard of ordinary care. Since our students are children, the standard is ordinary care that any adult would owe a child. The younger the child, the greater the standard of care that must be exercised.

- At no time may participants be left unattended or placed in the hallway unsupervised!

- In the event of an emergency, catechists or volunteers must make every reasonable effort to contact another adult or catechist to supervise their classroom in their absence.
- Do not send a student alone to the program director, on an errand, or to the restroom.
- Do not leave the classroom to take a student to the office yourself unless you have provided for your class's proper supervision. Send two students or a classroom aide to bring the program director to you.
- Permission to leave a classroom should be granted as the exception, and then only with a student partner.
- Proper supervision ensures that students do not tamper with things in the desks, closets, storage areas, bulletin boards, or chalk boards. Any incidents of vandalism are to be reported to the program director immediately.

Shared Space

During the academic year, it is important that catechists exercise extreme care and concern for the orderliness and property of the classrooms. All catechists are expected to comply with the following requirements:

- Desks may not be moved or rearranged.
- If crafts are utilized during the session, the catechist must ensure that the room is clean afterwards. Glue, crayon, and marker especially should be washed from desktops if present. The floor should be swept of any debris/trash. Absolutely no glitter is to be used in the classroom.
- Desks and chairs need to be put in order after use.
- Windows are to be shut and locked.
- All lights are to be turned off.
- Be sure to report any unusual conditions or any broken items to the program director before departing.

There should be adequate blackboard space and desktops should be free of student belongings. If you find that there is no available board space, or students' belongings on top of the desks, when you report class, please inform the program director at the end of the evening so that the matter may be addressed with the school faculty member.

Likewise, catechists are primarily responsible for overseeing the conduct and behavior of the students entrusted to their care. Therefore, they should exercise vigilance in preventing acts of vandalism by PREP students in the classroom. No PREP student has any need to touch the contents of the desk they are assigned. Damaged or missing items from a school student's desks may result in suspension or dismissal from the program. Therefore, catechists are strongly encouraged to have assigned seating for students.

Program Fees

Program fees are a necessary part of OLG PREP and ensure that the program can provide students and their families with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs.

Tuition is due in full at the time of registration. However, being sensitive to the needs of our families experiencing hardship in a manifold of forms, a deferred payment plan is available upon request and granted at the discretion of the program director. Anyone who cannot pay the fee in full at the time of registration or who has difficulty making payment due to hardship should contact the program director to discuss other possible arrangements.

In the event that a student voluntarily leaves the program during the program year, or is dismissed from the program for any reason including, but not limited to, poor attendance, a disciplinary incident, or the possessions of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or a weapon on parish or school property, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.

In addition, there may be certain material fees associated with sacramental preparation that are in addition to ordinary registration fees. These material fees cover incidentals associated with sacramental preparation, including, but not limited to, sacramental enrichment packets, retreat experiences, guest speakers, certificates, etc. These fees are ordinarily due at the time of registration.

Snack Policy

There are numerous food born allergies, some of which are life threatening. Use of food items or snacks in the program are strictly forbidden. There is a significant risk of cross contamination with the day school students if a PREP student is using food items at the desk of a day school student with a food born allergy.

In response to the many PREP students with food allergies, the program is making every reasonable accommodation to lessen the possibility of exposure to food allergens by designating all classrooms as Snack Free Zones. This policy is to be followed before, during and after PREP time.

If there is an occasion for a special celebration, which includes special foods or snacks, the event shall be held in a communal PREP setting, such as the Parish Life Center. A parent or guardian of a student with a food allergy must be present at such gatherings or provide a snack for his/her child(ren).

The only exception that will be made is for medical necessity such as to accommodate a diabetic child or child with low blood glucose. A doctor's note will be required of families to obtain this exception.

Student Absence

Regular and consistent attendance at PREP is essential in helping students master knowledge of their faith. Attendance is one of several key factors considered when determining student eligibility for promotion.

Poor attendance can negatively impact a student's ability to attain proficient mastery of their faith. The following policies have been adopted to ensure that students succeed in mastering knowledge of their faith and the core content for their grade level.

Catechists will provide students with a class calendar/syllabus detailing class dates and the chapters and materials to be covered for each date. This may entail the digital distribution of website links to the publisher of our core curricula.

Students absent from 3 or more classes during the program year, and whose catechist indicates that they have partial proficiency or need assistance to attain mastery may be required to complete additional study in order to ensure that they have successfully mastered the required material to be considered for promotion at the end of the program year.

Students who attain 5 or more absences may be dismissed from the program and required to a) finish the school year via home-based catechesis with parents, or b) re-enroll in the following year's program and repeat their current grade. Students that elect option a) must successfully complete the home-based catechesis program established by the program director in order to be eligible for promotion at the end of the program year.

Extended Absences Due to Illness

An extended absence due to illness is defined as an absence that spans two or more consecutive weeks. Parents should be in regular contact with the program director during an extended absence so that we may work in partnership to ensure that missed assignments and class work are completed during the extended absence and to keep the student's formation and instruction up to date. Parents are responsible for completing missed assignments and class work with their children as outlined above.

Extended absences will not result in dismissal from the program so long as the following conditions are met: 1) all work is completed; and 2) the extended absence does not affect the student's mastery of the required material. A student's mastery may be assessed through appropriate reviews to ensure proficient mastery has been achieved for prolonged absences due to illness.

Safe Environment Program

In accord with the directives of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office for Child and Youth Protection, OLG PREP is mandated to offer Safe Environment Lessons to all enrolled students in the Spring of each academic year. These lessons ("Kid Talk" can be previewed online at the following link: <https://childyouthprotection.org/docs/KidTalkBinder2019.pdf>

Forms will be distributed at the appropriate time for parents who wish to opt out of this lesson for legitimate reasons.

Mandated Reporter

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

Pennsylvania State Law defines a mandated reporter as any person who comes into *direct* contact with children in the course of his or her employment, occupation, or professional practice. These individuals, who include CCD staff, catechists, and volunteers, must make a report.

In the state of Pennsylvania a mandated reporter who fails to report a case of suspected child abuse commits a felony of the 3rd degree if the mandated reporter willfully fails to report, the child abuse constitutes a felony of the 1st degree or higher, and the person has direct knowledge of the nature of the abuse (maximum sentence of 7 years if convicted). An offense that does not meet the above criteria is a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (maximum sentence of 2 years if convicted).

What is child abuse?

Child abuse under the new Child Protective Services Law is defined under five categories:

- Bodily Injury
- Sexual Abuse or Exploitation
- Creating the likelihood of bodily or sexual abuse or exploitation
- Serious Mental Injury
- Serious Physical Neglect

A child is defined as any individual under the age of 18. The requirement to report abuse applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by clergy, church officials, parish employees or volunteers.

Reporting Procedures

If a child is in imminent danger, call 911 immediately!

- Contact ChildLine if you have a suspicion that a child is being neglected or abused sexually, physically, or mentally.
 - By Phone at 1-800-932-0313 or
 - Online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>

- Complete and file a CY-47 Form (Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form) with the County Children and Youth Services where the alleged abuse occurred within 48 hours of calling ChildLine and submit it to **Philadelphia Department of Human Services**.

Department of Human Services

1515 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19102

- Only required for reports made by phone
- Online Reporting Option above includes submission of this form.

- Notify your Head of Institution (HOI)

In addition, while not required under the new CPS law, it is strongly recommended by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and law enforcement agencies to contact local police and notify the District Attorney's Office.

For Bucks County

- Doylestown Police Department: 215-348-4201
- Bucks County DA: 215-348-6344
- Bucks County Victim/Witness Assistance Unit: 215-348-6292

Such notification to local authorities allows for the swift mobilization of intervention. Remember, the goal is to protect the child from further harm as quickly as possible, so this additional step by Mandated Reporters is strongly recommended.

It is not your responsibility to attempt to identify the perpetrator in a case of suspected abuse, and the identity of the perpetrator does not need to be known by the Mandated Reporter for him/her to make a report. In addition, the child need not come before the Mandated Reporter in person in order for a report to be made.

Snow Emergencies and Program Cancellations

OLG PREP will follow Central Bucks School District for all closings and cancellations, i.e., if the school is closed for the day due to inclement weather, PREP will not meet that evening. Notifications will be distributed via OLG's Flocknote service to all registered PREP families and catechists. Catechists are asked to forward information to parents regarding the closure or cancellation as well. Local news and weather channels that report Central Bucks School District cancellations are to be considered the best way to know whether or not PREP is running that evening. Decisions regarding expected inclement weather in the evening will be made by no later than noon on the day of the expected inclement weather.

Class Participation

Students must come to class ready to participate in the planned activities. No lesson or activity will prove worthwhile if students do not participate in them. Participation also means that students come to class prepared for class. Students must ensure that they have the proper materials for class including, but not limited to, their textbook, writing implement, and copybook.

Discipline

This program observes a *no tolerance* policy with respect to behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional, or psychological intimidation, bullying, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment in all forms. Such behaviors violate the central tenets of our faith and should not be tolerated in any form from students or their family members.

The program director reserves the right to make the final determination of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior both in and outside of class, in the program generally, and outside the program, where such improper behavior affects the parish community, and the director reserves the right to make the final determination as to what behaviors warrant disciplinary action. The program reserves the right to amend the above as circumstances arise.

Promotion

Final decisions for promotion and retention are made at the end of the program year by the program director.

Textbooks

The textbooks used in the program are approved by the Office for Catholic Education. Every student will be assigned a textbook. This textbook is a necessary tool in helping the catechist achieve the required learning objectives. Therefore, students must bring their textbooks to class every week. Parents should exercise caution in making sure that the textbook is secured in a set place within the home, so it is not lost during the academic year. Lost textbooks will need to be replaced. Parents assume full responsibility for all costs associated with the replacement textbook including any taxes, shipping, and handling fees.

Communication

Effective communication in the program is vital for the program's success. The program director is ultimately responsible for all correspondence, which includes correspondence between program staff and students or their family members. When corresponding with parents or guardians, please keep the following in mind:

- Comments to parents/guardians should pertain to their own children only.
- Communication should be made only to those people who have a legitimate right to know. Only those who have Legal Custody have a legitimate right to know about their own children. Legal custody of a particular child should be known to the program director and communicated to the catechist/volunteer.
- The program director always has a right to know if an incident in any way involved a student, staff person, or parent during the operation of any parish program.
- Recording information on students must be objective and factual. Therefore, all written information should be behavior specific, behaviorally oriented, verifiable, and free from personal opinion.
- If a parent desires to speak with a catechist, arrangements should be made to meet with the parent prior to the start of the program or immediately following the program. The program director should be informed of such arrangements once they are made with a parent. The program director may be present at the meeting.
- If a catechist or volunteer has a need to speak with a parent, every effort should be made to do so prior to or after the program. The program director should be informed of the desire for and nature of such a meeting prior to arrangements being made by the catechist. The program director may be present at the meeting.
- The program director should be included in all discipline related matters and those of a sensitive nature.
- Catechists and volunteers should not contact parents or students via any methods listed under Inappropriate Methods of Communication.
- Catechists should make sure they are familiar with the directives of the Technology Addendum to the Standards of Ministerial Behavior.
- Catechists are not authorized to threaten the possibility of having to "repeat a grade" or other similar negative consequences to students or their parents/guardians. Concerns about student attendance, participation, etc., should be addressed to the Director, who will then handle the matter at his discretion.

Inappropriate Methods of Communication

The following list is good to include as it clearly defines forms of communication that are unacceptable for any adult to use with children in ministry:

The following list contains methods of communication that should not be used to contact a student or parent. The list is by no means exhausting and the catechist or volunteer should assume that other methods of communication similar to those listed below would also be deemed inappropriate: Cell phone, text messaging, instant messaging, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Skype, any social networking website, chat rooms, etc.

Use of such methods not only violates the program policies established for volunteers and catechists but can also place the volunteer/catechist at greater risk for accusations of inappropriate behavior by students or their families.

Catechists and volunteers should **NOT** accept “friend” requests or invitations for social networking websites from students.

Crisis Management Plan

This crisis management plan is adapted from the one utilized by Cold Spring Elementary.

911 Call:

- Dial 911 if there is a life-threatening situation occurring. Buckingham Police will be patrolling campus when PREP is in session already.
- Inform the Director and/or PREP Assistant about the call via distributed two-way radio.
- If you can see an ambulance pull into the lot from your classroom, pull down the shades if possible.

Fire:

Fire drill maps are located on the cover of the emergency folders hanging at the entrance of each classroom.

- Take the emergency folder with you, and follow the exit directions highlighted in red.
- Close all windows/doors, and exit the building as quickly as possible.
- Once outside, take attendance. If all students are accounted for, hold up the green card located in your emergency folder. If you are missing a student, or if you have additional students in your class, hold up the red card.
- Remain outside with class and await further instructions.

Active Shooter on Campus:

These procedures are used in the event someone is in school with a weapon.

- Whoever has information on the intruder should make an all-call with two-way radio. Provide as much information as possible.
- A decision will be made on whether to evacuate or lockdown/barricade.
- If you evacuate, exit via the classroom door, or break a window.
- If you lockdown barricade, tie the door shut with rope and boat cleat.

- Move objects such as desks, cabinets, chairs, etc. in front of the door.
- Do not open the door for anyone and have objects at the ready to be thrown at intruder, should they gain access to the room.

Lockdown:

The purpose of a lockdown is to keep staff/students in classrooms, in the event there is an incident occurring outside, in the vicinity of Cold Spring.

- Look out in the hall and quickly gather any nearby adults or children and then close your locked classroom door and turn off the lights.
- If you have any students or staff come into your room who aren't normally there, use two-way radio to contact the Director or Assistant.
- Once you close your door, do not open it for anyone who is knocking.
- Keep yourself and your students in the locked room.
- Open the closet door or pull down your paper roll to block the glass window near your door.
- Listen for instructions as to whether you can continue with normal activity while in lockdown or whether you need to keep everyone quiet.

Tornado or Hurricane:

- In the event of an emergency weather drill for tornado or hurricane, all classrooms will empty into the hallway and sit on the floor.
- Classroom windows and doors must be shut.
- All students on the second floor will leave their classrooms immediately and sit on the first floor.
- Do not sit near glass or in a large room with an expansive roof (gym, cafeteria, or library).
- Students should sit facing a wall in a crouched position placing their head between knees and covering their heads with their arms. Double lines of students are acceptable. Count heads once students are in the hallway and report any missing children to Director/Assistant.

Program Contact Information

Communication is key to a successful program. Please keep the following contact information on file in your cell phone for easy access at any time.

Program Director: Karen Brody
Office Phone: 267-247-5734
Cell Phone: 267-576-2298
Email: dre@olguadalupe.org

PREP Assistant: Joanna Huckel
Email: prep@olguadalupe.org

OLG Parish Office: 267-247-5374

Updating Contact Information

The contact information that you provide at the time of registration will be used as the primary means of contacting you. Updating changes to this information, especially changes to email addresses, is your sole responsibility. In order to receive necessary and vital information pertaining to your child's participation in our program it is imperative that you notify the program director as to any changes in address, phone numbers, or email.