

CATECHIST MANUAL 2011-2012

Kindergarten through Grade 5

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ROLE OF CATECHIST

The role of CATECHIST is one who is called to nurture a living, conscious and active faith in the children he/she teaches. A *CATECHIST* is one who witnesses to the faith by sharing his/her faith committed in word, experience, prayer and Liturgy.

The time commitment for the Faith Formation year is typically September through April. The *CATECHIST* plans and leads the Faith Formation session. The commitment requires continued **personal faith formation** (a minimum of six hours per year) and two Catechist Workshops during the year.

SKILLS NEEDED TO BE A CATECHIST

1. To be able to communicate the message of Jesus and current church teachings.
2. To plan and conduct a Faith Formation session using a variety of teaching and learning experiences.
3. To be sensitive and caring in relating with all children and parents.
4. To have the desire to share your faith with others.
5. To be committed to continued personal faith growth and knowledge by participating in formation programs offered by the diocese and parish.
6. To be able to deal with conflict and disagreement in a sensitive, understanding and confidential manner.
7. To be prompt – arrive 15 minutes before class begins.
8. To attend sessions consistently.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CATECHIST

ENCOURAGE PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The family is the main arena for nurturing the faith life of the child. Your task as catechist is to enrich the faith formation of children. Communicate by word and attitude that the parish community is in partnership with the family. Catechists affirm parents as vital and competent in nurturing their families' spirituality.

Building Small Faith communities

(Individual Sessions)

We believe that it is important to help the children understand what it means to be a part of a Catholic Christian Community. In essence, we are building small Christian Communities for the year. Our time together should reflect a prayerful and cooperative environment. Ultimately, we will work together to learn and share our faith in patience, hope and compassion for each other.

BEGINNING THE YEAR

Call the parent

Before the first session call the family to introduce yourself and give your room number where the child has been assigned. Invite the parent to give you any helpful information about the child he/she feels would be important and **communicate that this information will remain confidential**. Communicate to the parents that they are always welcome to visit during the session. Invite the parent to the parent meeting and open house of Children's Faith Formation ("CFF") - check calendar for the appropriate open house session. Talk to the child, if possible, and welcome him/her. Create an open relationship.

Prepare a brief letter to send home with the children the first day as a formal way of introducing yourself and your co-catechist so the family gets to know you a little better. Sample letters from Catechists in previous years are included in your packet and are available from the Faith Formation office. The CFF office will be happy to make the copies you need. If the content of the letter changes, other than basic information, the letter needs to be approved by the CFF office before it is sent to the parents.

LESSON PREPARATION

- A) It is important to attend all catechist in-service meetings. By sharing your ideas and experience, you will enrich each other and your own teaching.
- B) Preparation time ordinarily requires 2-3 hours per session utilizing the catechist's manual and supplemental materials to develop your own lesson plan.
- C) Make use of available enrichment resources located in the CFF office in the primary building.
- D) Arrive in your room 15 minutes prior to the session to organize your class materials and welcome the children.

CATECHIST CHECKLIST (K through Grade 5)

BEFORE CLASS:

- A) Fill out a Request Form for any copying you need, supplies, or equipment that you want to use (VCR, puppets, storybooks, etc.) Please return this request form to the CFF workroom after class or bring it to the CFF office in the Pastoral Center from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. **Requests are due by Monday at 4 pm prior to the Tuesday session, Tuesday at 4 pm before the Wednesday session or by Friday at 4 pm before the Sunday session. Please communicate by e-mail or telephone. Contact information is located on page 15 of this manual.**
- B) Any handouts or other supplementary materials (videos, etc.) which are not a part of Epiphany's resources are to be submitted to the Coordinator at least 48 hours prior to use in the sessions.
- C) The workroom for resource material is available to Catechists. Stop by the CFF office Monday through Friday to check out the key.
- D) Arrive early, **at least 15 minutes before each session** to be informed of any news from CFF office and to set up your session.
- E) Pick up your Catechist folder that is located outside the CFF office and return to the crate before you leave for the day.
- F) Check the supplies that are in your room (markers, pencils, crayons, glue, etc.) If something is missing or you need more supplies, go to the CFF office to pick up additional supplies.
- G) If you plan special activities for your class, tell the on-site Coordinator well in ad-

vance to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings (outdoors, tour of church, etc.).

CONDUCTING THE SESSION

Under the guidance of the CFF Coordinator, the catechist will conduct the session using a variety of educational methods with the assistance of a co-catechist.

A Reminder: Sometimes a catechist has additional resources not provided by Epiphany that they would like to use in their Faith Formation sessions. Because the Coordinator is ultimately responsible for the curriculum in the Faith Formation program, any handouts or other supplementary materials (videos, etc.), which are not a part of Epiphany's resources, are to be submitted to the Coordinator prior to use in the sessions (i.e., at least 48 hours before the session).

CREATING A PRAYERFUL ENVIRONMENT:

Your classroom is shared with our Epiphany community. Many of the rooms are used for various purposes. Therefore, the decorations we create for our rooms must be stored each week in the cabinets provided. If your space is in the primary building (Child's Play area) refrain from touching the pre-school decorations. If your space is in the secondary building (rooms 201-209) or in the Faith Formation Building (Rooms 300's) please use the cork boards provided to apply decorations to your rooms... **No tape on the walls.** Please ask the on-site coordinator for supplies to apply decorations to the walls. These supplies are limited and you must use the materials we supply to you for this purpose.

Prayer Table

Each room has a prayer table. Your prayer table should include:

Prayer cloth—your class should make a prayer cloth together. These prayer cloths are usually donated to local charities of your class' choice after the Faith Formation Sessions have ended. Many unfinished cloths have been donated to the Linus Project through the years. Individuals have also been graced with these beautiful prayer blankets. You do not have to have a completed prayer cloth, just one that the children have helped create.

The Word: A Bible, a story, a quote...

A living plant.

A light—we cannot have lit candles in the rooms, but you can have something that represents light: a drawing, a battery operated candle...

A color that represents the liturgical season of the present time.

A statue of the resurrected Jesus. This is supplied by CFF (found in the supply cabinet).

Name Your Prayer Space:

Children identify by grouping together. In a joint effort, name your classroom instead of using the number on the door. Be creative. (Consider, Mary's Garden, St. Francis' Den...) The name should be conducive to prayer. This will help the children know that they are entering prayer space not just a classroom.

Portable Bulletin Boards:

Portable bulletin boards are available for use. If your class would like to decorate a bulletin board for the parish to witness, ask the on-site coordinator to use one from the Family Center.

DURING CLASS:

Get to know the children right away. Call them by name. Use name tags or name cards on their desk.

Attendance:

a. The Student:

Take attendance using the attendance sheets in your Catechist folder. Place a check mark in the appropriate space indicating the student is present and the letter A if they are absent. (See example page in your Catechists' Folder). Keep the attendance page in your weekly folder. A permanent record will be kept in the main office. *Kindergarten catechists use poster board with the children's name and stickers for attendance. Kindergarten attendance is not recorded in the office.*

After three consecutive absences, **the catechist will call the parent** to inquire about continued involvement in the program. An **Attendance Follow-Up** form will need to be completed by the Catechist and returned to the Session Coordinator. If, after four consecutive absences and no response, it is reasonable to assume that the child will not return to the program. At this point, the CFF office will handle the situation and you will be notified via a Drop Form if the child has been removed from the class. However, a child will not be removed from the attendance rolls until contact is made with the parent. No refund will be issued, as the textbook and necessary supplies have already been purchased.

b. The Catechist:

Commitment to your ministry is imperative. If the catechist will be absent from a session, the co-catechist in the classroom is expected to take the lead role. The catechist who will be absent is responsible for contacting the Faith Formation

office as soon as possible so that a substitute can be found so that there are two VIRTUS trained adults in the classroom. Please contact the Session Coordinator by e-mail or phone. (Contact information is provided on page 15 of this manual.)

Form class rules or guidelines together, as well as non-negotiable rules to follow. (See sample Covenant inside pocket) Make sure the children help make the rules and follow them. You may want to write these rules and guidelines on poster board and display it during class time as a visual reminder of the behavior that is expected. (See Discipline, below.)

Discourage a trail of bathroom goes . . . It is very distracting to the progress of the session. Limit to one at a time and only for emergencies . . . the bathroom can quickly become a hangout for mischief, so keep tabs on children you allow to leave class.

Give children opportunities to help gather supplies, clean up, or maybe take turns being a helper.

Enjoy what you're doing. Plan your lesson well in advance to avoid last minute panic. Try to use a variety of ideas to bring the lesson across (storytelling, games, simple art projects, etc.) Have fun with the children and be willing to share yourself and your faith with them.

Behavior Expectations:

Children innately need guidelines and limits in order to feel secure and comfortable. In a new environment, children instinctively respond by trying to understand it, find its limits, and make it their own. They will test to see how far they can go with the person in authority. Please review and utilize the following approach used at Epiphany in regard to discipline in your classroom.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Cell phones and other electronic devices can be a distraction during the class. Please turn off all electronic devices during class or in large group events. Faith Formation Catechists may hold all devices until the end of class if a youth is found using such a device.

Catechists may turn their cell phones to vibrate in case of emergency. If you must answer your phone during class, please excuse yourself to the hallway in front of your room to take incoming calls.

Discipline procedure:

This procedure is in place for your benefit as well as the students. As a member of our CFF program, we ask you to adhere to this procedure.

Effective discipline requires mutual respect. Show students you care when they behave acceptably. You can be friendly and helpful to students and at the same time be firm and consistent in your enforcement of the rules and consequences. It is especially important to deal firmly and quickly with any incidents that arise at the beginning of the year or you will lose credibility. In light of all the factors that may affect the children coming to CFF, being in school all day, tired, sports activities, etc., student misbehavior in CFF classes is understandable. But being understandable doesn't make it acceptable. Our goal should be to establish good discipline: a climate conducive to learning and growth.

A. Be Fair

Effective discipline requires mutual respect, and being fair is a vital first step.

Clear rules. Take time at the start of the year to establish rules and make the rules and disciplinary procedures clear. An effective technique is to write the rules on a poster and display it during the session. Having a visual reminder of what is expected and referring to it when needed can reinforce the standard of behavior you expect within your environment. Concentrate on a few rules, be sure they are enforceable, help children understand the need for such rules, and agree on what will happen if the rule is violated. If possible, the children should help formulate these policies. Research shows that having clear rules improves performance as well as discipline. It is important that children understand that if they continue to exhibit inappropriate behavior, they will be sent to the CFF office. Verbalize to the child that this is a choice they are making by violating the rules. Serious offenses are dealt with by immediate removal from the classroom.

Consistent enforcement. Follow through on your policies by consistently responding to violations according to the plan. It is especially important to do so at the ***beginning***, when some children test the system to see what will happen.

B. Be Friendly

Present the rules in a friendly, cooperative manner and then accentuate the positive.

Encouragement. Show children that you care when they behave acceptably. Tell them what specific behavior you appreciated. Words of praise, pats on the shoulder, smiles, positive written comments and special privileges (handing out supplies) all help. Such expressions should be spontaneous, sincere, varied, and appropriate to the age and needs of each child.

Understanding. Some children suffer from family discord and divorce, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, or personal emotional problems. It is important to be understanding as well as firm with a problem child. Compassion is needed to understand the cause of the behavior.

C. **Be Firm**

You can be friendly and helpful to children and at the same time be firm and consistent in your enforcement of the rules and consequences.

Private responses. It is best to correct a child's behavior privately, not publicly in front of the class. Try to guide the child toward the appropriate behavior rather than simply punishing a violation, and concentrate your comments on the problem behavior and not on the child. Research shows that such private responses are ***more effective*** at reducing disruptive behavior and increasing child respect for the catechist than loud, public rebukes which sometimes actually encourage disorderly children.

Ordinary kinds of discipline situations can become a persistent problem unless you check the first offense. **Never wait until behavior has become an insurmountable problem to offer correction.** It is important to deal firmly and quickly with any incidents that arise at the beginning of the year or you will lose credibility.

If a child does not respond to your first correction, clearly state your expectation a second time, asserting that continued misbehavior will result in corrective action. Unfortunately, some children do not respond to a repeated correction.

Sometimes a student needs a reminder to help them follow class rules.

It may be best to correct a student's behavior privately, not publicly in front of the class. Take the child outside of the classroom and remind them of the classroom rules and guidelines. Clearly state your expectations and guide the student toward the appropriate behavior. Affirm their efforts of self-control and making better choices.

Another technique would be to offer a clear choice to the student. For example, "Jack, you can get to work now or you may leave the room and finish your work in the CFF office." This enables students to take responsibility for their own behavior. Make sure you follow through with enforcing the choice.

The procedure for a student who continues to misbehave and does not want to cooperate after one or two warnings is to send the student to the CFF office where the Coordinator will talk to the student about the choices they made and give him/her quiet time away from the class. If a student is disrupting the session, it is better to remove that student from the class. You do a disservice to the student, yourself, and the rest of the class if you spend a lot of time correcting one student. Removing a student from your class is not a sign of your own failure. Your ability to function in the role of catechist depends on the kind of cooperation you receive from your students. Not acting in such a situation would be the *real mistake*.

The Coordinators are always willing to help you and support you in your ministry. Never hesitate to approach us with problems.

Prayer

Begin each prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Pray the Our Father in unison during each session. Other prayers are appropriate at different ages. Consult the Faith Formation Coordinator for Archdiocesan Guidelines. (See contact information on page 15 of this manual.)

The Stations of the Cross (a personal Lenten devotion) will be offered to the children who attend Faith Formation on Tuesday or Wednesday. Third grade through fifth grade will attend a Children's Stations of the Cross during Lent. They will attend once and by grade level. First and second grades will have a Church Tours during the Lenten Season. Sunday sessions Grades 3 through 5 will have a special Lenten Prayer Services during Lent (no Stations of the Cross on Sundays). First and second grades will have a Church Tours during Lent.

Each session, by grade (1-5), will be offered a Church Tour at different times during the year.

Sacred and Safe:

Beginning September 1, 2011, in compliance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Cardinal DiNardo is directing that every parish in the Archdiocese implement Sacred & Safe, a program which provides faith-based safe environment lessons for children and youth in Kindergarten through the 12th grades. An annual program will involve an ongoing endeavor to provide one grade-specific lesson each year to help children and youth develop the skills to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

An essential parent component will complement the grade-specific lessons. During the

Elementary Open House Night, a parent meeting will be held in the Family Center to explain this program to the parents for students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. At this time the parents will have the option to decide if their child/children will be present for the lesson. The lesson will be presented to the children during a CFF session. (Note: Open House Night and age specific CFF lesson on syllabus).

The lesson will be conducted by one of the on-site coordinators for CFF (Sue Hughes, Joan Creedon, Dawn Slezak or Beth Harvey) using the lesson plans provided by the Sacred and Safe Program. These lessons will be presented to each grade level at one time. (For example: all the Kindergarten classes will be given the lesson using a double classroom; all 1st graders will be in the Family Center, etc.) **Catechists are required to remain with the students during this presentation.**

Music

Music is an intricate part of Faith Formation. As in the words of the National Directory for Catechesis, "...Sacred music is an integral part of Church's Liturgy. ...Music invites the faithful to give glory to God; it enhances their prayer, fosters the unity of minds and hearts, and aims to draw them closer to Christ... Parishes should provide opportunities for their people to learn sacred hymns in order that they may fully participate in the liturgical life of the Church." (National Directory for Catechesis, pp 150-151). Each year our music sessions have varied depending on finding a volunteer to lead us in song. All children should have the opportunity to participate in music. We strongly encourage the use of music during a session. Please contact an on site coordinator to obtain CD's at least a week prior to your session. CD's are located in the CFF office.

If a music minister is available for our sessions, times for music will be included on the syllabus for each grade. The grades will rotate through music with each music session lasting 15 minutes. Music during Faith Formation is not an option. It is expected all classes attend music time.

Music will not be offered during the Season of Lent. A more solemn atmosphere is appropriate for this time of year. The music ministers will contribute to Lenten Prayer Services such as Stations of the Cross or Sunday Prayers during Lent.

Crafts

A pre-packed craft will be supplied to each grade level three times a year. (Note the craft dates on the schedule.) Please fill out a Craft Form (found in this Catechist's Manual). Note on this form if you would like a craft team member to come and instruct your class to complete the craft. Note also what time you would like the craft presented to the class. If you

elect not to complete the craft, please do not open the craft bag and return unopened crafts to the craft room (Room 208) immediately. Crafts are located with the on-site coordinator in the CFF office.

If you would like craft ideas for a particular lesson please fill out the “Craft Idea” form two weeks prior to the lesson being presented. We do have some supplies on hand so if you need supplies check with our Craft Team Leader so the supplies can be purchased for you. Our budget is limited but we will do all we can to get these supplies for you. (Contact information for the Craft Coordinator is provided on page 15 of this manual.)

Use care when entering the craft room. The craft room is located in Room 208. Room 208 is located on the far west side, west end of the secondary building.

We have a limited amount of supplies. Please check with the craft coordinator for items that you need and materials that are available. Check out any materials that are used by signing the craft log book located on the middle table in Room 208. Construction paper and poster paper is available. Yarn is also readily available. Other items must be ordered. Please check with the craft coordinator before taking. You have permission to use construction paper and the die cuts.

Only trained staff members at Epiphany have permission to use the laminating machine. Please give one week for laminating to be complete. Only use flat objects to be laminated. Die cuts from paper, stickers made of paper, and colorings are appropriate. Sequins, flat beads, and anything raised is not appropriate for laminating. Items to be laminated must be approved by the Faith Formation Coordinator.

Awards and Gifts

Awards can be a positive motivation factor in a child’s performance. Recognizing special gifts of a child by distributing special stickers, stamps, and/or certificates is appropriate **provided** everyone in the class has received one by the end of the year.

Please refrain from giving out special gifts to the children. Catechists please do not spend your own money. A supply of appropriate incentives will be kept in the back Faith Formation office. Non-tangible items can also be effective. Ideas include: leader of the line, helper for the day, bring-a-pillow-to-class-day, paper crowns, in-class-no-shoes, etc. These ideas may seem elementary for the 5th grade catechists. Fifth graders love to play games. Be creative.

Special gifts for the children will be provided by the CFF office to give the children throughout the year. All children will be given similar gifts through the Faith Formation Office at specific times, such as, Christmas, Easter, and a few other occasions. **It is im-**

perative that all children are treated equally. Problems arise when some children get special gifts and others do not, especially if brothers and sisters are in different classes.

Perfect attendance certificates are not awarded to the children. Different family situations must be respected, and many times a child is unable to attend class because of uncontrolled circumstances such as illness in the family, parent visitation rights in the case of divorce, etc...

Refreshments

In keeping with parish policy, there is **NO FOOD OR DRINK ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOMS**. This policy takes into consideration: keeping the classroom clean; the time of day faith formation is offered; the increasing number of children sensitive to sugar and those allergic to nuts, food additives, etc. Encourage parents to give their child/children a snack prior to arriving at Faith Formation sessions.

At special times during the Liturgical year, food will be part of the learning experience. Great care will be taken so all children will be able to participate in these activities. If you have any concerns or questions about our Food Policy, please call the office to discuss this issue. Please contact the Session Coordinator by e-mail or phone. (Contact information is provided on page 15 of this manual.)

Service Projects

By the end of the Faith Formation year each grade level will have been given the chance to participate in a Service Project. The guidelines vary for each grade.

K - Welcome prayer to be included in the Parish Welcome Packets.

1st grade - Baptismal Memory Boxes for parents taking the baptismal classes

2nd grade - Prayer cards for Confirmation Candidates

3rd grade - Service to CFF (to be determined)

4th - crosses for RCIA participants

5th grade - Bake Sale in conjunction with Knights of Columbus Brisket Sales in February.

*The 5th grade students, catechists, the CFF coordinator, and Outreach Coordinator will determine how to best use the monies raised by this endeavor. The money will stay within or close to the Epiphany Community at large.

Dismissal Procedures

Children will be kept in their rooms until a parent (or with the parent's permission an older sibling) comes for them. All children should be picked up at the classroom and not allowed to wander the premises for their own protection and safety. Parents are required to fill out the “**Method of Release**” form. These forms will be kept in the catechists’ folder and copies of these forms will be kept in the Faith Formation office.

In addition, any child in grades 3-5 who is expected to walk or ride a bike home or meet the parent in the pick-up zone should bring written permission signed by a parent which is kept on file in the office. One letter at the beginning of the year is sufficient. ***For safety reasons, kindergarten and 1st grade children are to be picked up at their classroom door.*** If carpooling arrangements are made, the catechist should receive notification in writing as to who will be picking up the child. **Catechists should keep the letters from parents with their class records and a copy of each letter should be sent to the CFF office to be kept on file.**

Parents are asked to notify the catechist at the beginning of the session if their child needs to be dismissed early. Notification can be by personal contact or a note.

AFTER CLASS

Catechists are asked to **leave the room neat and clean.** Please return any materials or media at the conclusion of the session to the CFF office. Please store any posters or papers you wish to save for future classes in the cabinet in your room or in the CFF office. Many catechists will be using the same room so it is important to put away everything. Do not attach papers to the wall for any reason, even for a short time. If you wish to display posters or papers during the session, please utilize the cork strip above the whiteboard using push pins. **NO TAPE ON THE WALLS!**

Have children put away supplies, paper in trash, etc. Store any posters or papers you wish to save for future sessions in the cabinet in your room or in the CFF office. Leave the room clean for next use. If tabletops are messy because of markers or glue, please use 409 and paper towels to wipe the tables. 409 spray bottles are kept in the classroom cabinets.

Use **only** the provided Dry Erase Markers on the white boards. Spray cleaners for these boards are also in the cabinet. **DO NOT USE 409 ON THE WHITE BOARDS.**

If yours is the last session of the day, please turn off lights and the air conditioning unit, if one is in your class.

Return any borrowed supplies, equipment or other resources that are kept in the CFF office in the primary building.

END OF YEAR EVALUATION

Catechists are needed to help evaluate the faith formation programs at Epiphany by ongoing communication with the Coordinator and on-site Coordinators regarding difficulties, concerns, and suggestions. Catechists will be asked to complete an end-of-year written evaluation. Communicating our strengths and weaknesses will provide direction for CFF.

ONGOING FORMATION

A catechist must be attentive to his/her own adult faith to be able to facilitate that growth in others. Therefore, the role “catechist” involves your own faith, growth and formation. Participation in events such as Catechist Day, Diocesan events, retreats, parish adult education programs and catechist certification classes are strongly encouraged.

Our parish bulletin will inform you of Adult Faith Formation opportunities in our parish. Copies of the quarterly publication *Resoundings*, from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Continuing Christian Education Office are located in the Faith Formation Office. Archdiocesan classes, programs, retreats, conferences, workshops, etc. are listed in this publication.

All catechists are working toward certification, through workshops, and in-service opportunities. An Adult Formation Log is included in the back of this Catechist Manual. It is important to keep track of your individual hours.

The in-service session, *Getting Started as a Catechist*, is necessary for all new Catechists. This session will be offered at Epiphany and the date and time will be communicated to all new catechists by the Faith Formation office.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

We will provide knowledge, support and resources to assist you. We will do all we can to assist you in being prepared with lesson planning and catechetical skills. We will keep you informed of formation opportunities both Archdiocesan and parish.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments throughout the year, you can contact:

Beth Harvey

Coordinator

Children's Faith Formation

(281) 578-8271

[*bharvey@epiphanycatholic.org*](mailto:bharvey@epiphanycatholic.org)

To contact the on-site session coordinators...

Joan Creedon

On-Site Session Coordinator

Grades 1-5

H 281-395-5094

C 713-502-2627

[*creedonjoan@aol.com*](mailto:creedonjoan@aol.com)

Sue Hughes

On-Site Session Coordinator

Kindergarten

H 281-578-0872

Jennifer Spangle

Craft Coordinator

Grades 1-5

H 281-858-5156

C 832-889-9215

[*jtspangle@gmail.com*](mailto:jtspangle@gmail.com)

Denise Narum

Substitute Finder for Tue / Wed 4:45

H 281-693-7773

C 832-868-8254

*Sun & Wed 6:30 Call Joan Creedon
for a substitute*

Epiphany Faith Formation Office Hours are 8:30 – 4:30 Monday through Thursday and on Friday 8:30-4:00. Telephone 281-578-8271. E-mail: religiousedu@epiphanycatholic.org

