

Religious Education Parent Handbook

2018- 2019



*St. Katharine Drexel Church
Mechanicsburg, PA*

Dear Parents,

There have been many questions and concerns about why the changes to our Religious Education Program as we celebrate our 30th Parish Anniversary and review our Religious Education Handbook.

The following talking points are an attempt to respond to these questions, comments, and our prayerful discussion and reflection as we move forward.

- There is a need to move from a Religious Education/Classroom/Student model to a Parish/Parent-Home Family model based on a healthy balance between classroom and family catechesis with parents as first teachers.
- There is a need to improve Mass attendance along with class attendance, therefore, classes will be held at a different time than our Mass schedule.
- At this time, Fr. Ken is not involved in classes and time with parents and students. He can't do that because he is in the church celebrating Mass during every session.
- There is a need for ongoing communication and partnership between parents, catechists, coordinator, and parish in the Faith Formation of our children.
- There is a need for ongoing parent Faith Formation opportunities.
- Flexibility, Listening, Dialogue, Compromise, Commitment, and Faith remain hallmarks of our Faith Formation program.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kenneth G. Smith
Pastor

St. Katharine Drexel Church

Rev. Kenneth G. Smith – Pastor

Office of Religious Education

Scott Root – Coordinator of Religious Education, Grade 6-8

Email rootscott@skdparish.com
Phone (717) 795-8572

Mary Ann Schleihauf – Coordinator of Religious Education, Grade K-5

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Phone (717) 795-8572

Contact Information

Religious Education Office Phone Number: (717) 795 – 8572
Parish Office Phone Number: (717) 697-8716

Saint Katharine Drexel Church
Office of Religious Education
1 Peter Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

We Want to Hear From You!

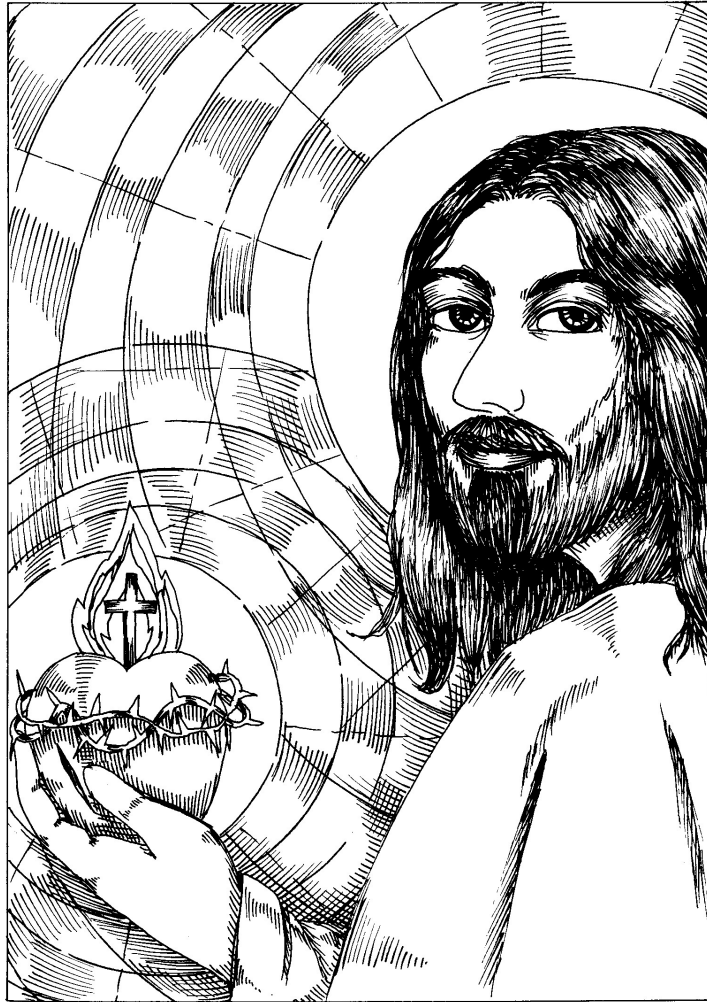
If you have questions about our Religious Education program, please feel free to call the Religious Education Office number (717-795-8716) and leave a message for Scott or Mary Ann, or you may send us an email.

Scott Root, CRE Middle Grades
rootscott@skdparish.com

Mary Ann Schleihauf, CRE Elementary Grades
Maryann@skdparish.com

The Aim of the Saint Katharine Drexel Religious Education Program

- To provide our students with knowledge of the Faith
- To provide our students with knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the Sacraments
- To provide our students with a moral formation in Jesus Christ
- To teach our students how to pray with Christ
- To prepare our students to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church
- To promote a missionary spirit that prepares our students to be present as Christians in society



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Religious Education Class Attendance Policy

Class Attendance is vital to a child's growth in Faith Formation. Class attendance is a priority. All absences should result in homework provided by the catechist and provided to the child/parent for completion. This homework needs to be completed within a week of the missed class. If a child misses more than two classes, please make arrangements with the catechist and coordinator to make up class work.

There will be no more excused/unexcused classes. All missed classes will result in homework being done at home with family catechesis. A student must fulfill all homework assignments and pass the final grade level test to be eligible to move to the next grade at the end of the year. We will work closely with all families, parents, and students, to make sure that each student will be able to use his or her potential.

Students are not to attend other sessions to make-up classes. Homework will be done at home under the parent's supervision.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

Students are expected to arrive for class several minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

Students should arrive within the following timeframes:

Session 1 Summer classes – Arrival between 5:50 p.m. – 5:57 p.m.

Session 1 Sunday classes – Arrival between 7:50 a.m. – 7:57 a.m.

Session 2 Summer classes – Arrival between 8:50 a.m. – 8:57 a.m.

Session 2 Sunday classes – Arrival between 10:00 a.m. – 10:07 a.m.

Session 3 – Arrival between 5:50 p.m. – 5:57 p.m.

Students are expected to arrive on time for class. Excessive lateness or early dismissal will be considered an absence and homework will be given and need to be completed under the supervision of the parent. More than three late arrivals or early dismissals result in an absence.

If a child needs to leave before regular dismissal or arrives after the doors are shut for security purposes, a parent must stop in the office to let the Coordinator know.

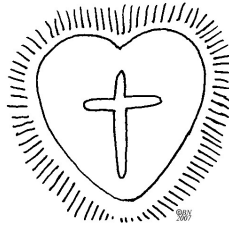
Teachers are not, under any circumstances, allowed to dismiss students from a class unless a designated volunteer or the coordinator comes to the room to get the child.

Parents are not permitted to take a student out of a classroom without first coming to the office and a designated person with clearances will get your child/student out of class for you.

Parents are not permitted in the classroom area without clearances.

Thank you for understanding this very important child safety policy





Mass Requirements

Except in extreme circumstances or in case of illness, children are expected to attend Mass **in addition to** their Religious Education classes. This is particularly important to remember when your children attend Religious Education class on Sunday mornings.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The first precept [of the Church] (You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation) requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord [Sunday]." (CCC 2042)

Class attendance does not take the place of Sunday (or Saturday vigil) Mass at any time.

Students are not to go to class in lieu of Mass attendance. If a child has not attended Mass and will not at a later time that weekend, he or she should skip class, go to Mass, and complete make up work.

If it is regularly a hardship for you to get your children to Mass in addition to their Religious Education classes, please call the Religious Education Office and we will try to assist you in contacting the parents of other children in the program to set up a carpool.

Confessions

We offer two Children's Confession services each year, during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Like Sunday Mass, it is critical that you get your children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation **at least once each year.** "The second precept [of the Church] (You shall confess your sins at least once a year.)" ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness." (CCC 2042)

It is best to go to Confession frequently – even if one has not committed any mortal sins. "Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ, and progress in the life of the Spirit." (CCC 1458)

Confessions are held for all members of the Parish according to the schedule below. We encourage you and your children to come to Confession regularly.

Wednesdays: 6:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.
Fridays: 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.
Saturdays: 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.; 5:45 p.m.
Anytime by appointment or request

It is critical for children, who are forming the habits that they will practice for the rest of their lives, to know that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the greatest treasures that Christ has given to us through His Church and that frequent reception of this Sacrament is a normal part of Catholic life.

Therefore, children are expected to take part in the Children's Confessions, to join you at one of our Parish Reconciliation services, or to come for Confessions on a Saturday evening.

Home Schooling Policy

Parents who wish to homeschool their children in the faith may do so by making arrangements with the appropriate Coordinator of Religious Education with the Pastor's approval; catechetical materials will be made available to those who wish to make this commitment.

Homeschooling can only be completed one semester at a time – Fall/Spring.

Children who are homeschooled are encouraged to attend the sacramental preparation classes in their respective years—Grade Two (First Penance/First Communion) or Grade Eight (Confirmation).

Children/Parents/Families are also required to meet with the Coordinator on a semester basis and meet with the Pastor prior to receiving Sacraments.

Textbook Policy

The student is expected to purchase the following for each class:

- Student Textbook
- Parent Handbook
- Notebook
- Bible (can be borrowed or brought from home)
- Catechism (Grades 6-8) (can be borrowed)

Student Evaluations

Student reviews will occur twice a year in December and in May to evaluate student progress throughout the Religious Education school year.

Primary and Elementary (K-4) will receive a Pass (P) or a Fail (F).

Middle and Secondary (5-8) will receive a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F).

A Parent/Catechist meeting will occur if a student falls below a C or a P grade.

Tuition

Tuition helps cover the cost of the Religious Education program. It provides funds for textbooks, activity books, Bibles, reference materials, classroom and art supplies, audiovisuals, office supplies, postage, catechist training, and all other items necessary throughout the course of the year.

The tuition for Religious Education is \$75.00 for the first child, \$100.00 for two children, and \$125.00 for three or more children. The Sacramental Program has a separate tuition since more materials

are required in those programs. Information on the Sacramental Preparation program tuition will be given at the Parent Meetings for the Sacramental Preparation programs.

If tuition payment is a problem, please contact the Director of Religious Education.

Tuition checks should be made payable to "Saint Katharine Drexel" and should be mailed or turned in to the Religious Education Office.

Personal Belongings

Aside from items necessary for class, all students are to leave personal belongings at home. The following items will be removed from your child's possession if they are brought out during Religious Education class and become a distraction. A parent will be asked to pick the items up outside of class time.

- Personal stereos or iPods
- Cameras
- Handheld electronic games
- Any electronic items
- Magazines
- Cell phones are permitted on the grounds for emergency purposes, but must be turned off and kept in pockets at all times.
- "Heely's" are not permitted on the grounds at any time. No skates or shoes with wheels are to be worn to Religious Education class.
- Toys or fidget spinners are not permitted.

Student Conduct

All students on Parish grounds are to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful and reverent toward Our Lord, our Pastor, their teachers, and the children around them.

In classrooms, children are to follow the directions of their teachers, listen attentively, and avoid class disruptions. Questions are to be asked in an orderly and respectful manner.

At all times, students are to conduct themselves according to the moral teachings of the Church. Failure to do so may result in expulsion from the Parish Religious Education program.

Please Discuss With Your Children

While it is our hope that our students find learning the Truths that God has revealed to us about Who He is and how we need to live in order to enter Heaven interesting and enjoyable and fun, we ask parents to keep in mind that the goal of Religious Education is not strictly fun. In fact, it is, in most respects, a very serious undertaking.

Even though some of our programs are conducted during the summer, your children are attending classes that fulfill the diocesan requirements for Religious Education in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Therefore, please make sure your children understand that students are expected to conduct themselves as they would at their regular schools, even during Summer Sessions.

Also, please make sure your children understand that all people are created in the Image and Likeness of God and are to be treated with respect at all times. Teasing other children or

embarrassing them in any way is not permitted regardless of gender, ability or disability, or physical appearance.

If any parents or children become aware of a situation where a child is not being treated with due respect by anyone, please let me know immediately so that the situation can be rectified.

Discipline

Our teachers are volunteers who generously take their own time to pass on the Truths of the Faith to the young people of Saint Katharine Drexel Church. We appreciate their time and effort and we go out of our way to make sure that the children in their classes conduct themselves in such a way that the teachers can always teach their planned lessons.

In instances of discipline problems that disrupt class, the teacher or aide will excuse the students from class and send them to the Coordinator of Religious Education. Appropriate action will be determined based on the severity of the disruption.

Usually, in the case of a first offense the child will be warned to stop the distraction and we will check with the teacher to make sure that the problem subsides. In the case of a second offense (or a first offense that is of a serious nature) the parent or guardian will receive a letter or phone call from the Office of Religious Education or the child's teacher. If there is a third offense, the parent will be required to accompany the child to class for the remainder of the year, or we will arrange for a private tutor to catechize the child in an individual situation.

The teacher is always given the option of contacting parents directly to discuss discipline issues unless you request otherwise in advance.

Weapons

No weapons are permitted on the property at Saint Katharine Drexel Church at any time.

In the event that a student is discovered with a weapon, Father Smith, Religious Education Coordinators, law enforcement, and the child's parent will be notified immediately. The student will be suspended from the program pending review of the situation. In some circumstances, an alternate Religious Education program may be suggested for the student following the incident.

Arrival and Pickup

All students are to enter the building for classes through the Religious Education Doors. These are the doors located in the corridor between the two buildings at the back of the building.

Please note that students may come down to class from Mass through the stairways. For security reasons, all outside doors other than the previously mentioned Religious Education doors will remain locked from the outside while classes are in session even on Sunday mornings.

Because traffic can get backed up near that door, we ask that parents who are dropping off older children, move up past the Religious Education door to drop children off. Also, it is a good idea to arrive a few minutes early.

Parents who walk their children in to class, should park in a parking spot and then walk into the building.

Teachers are not to dismiss students early, so plan on arriving to pick your child up at the advertised time.

Please note the following dismissal times:

Session 1 Summer Classes – Dismissal at 8:00 p.m.

Session 2 Summer Classes – Dismissal at 11:00 a.m.

Session 1 Sunday Classes – Dismissal at 8:50 a.m.

Session 2 Sunday Classes – Dismissal at 11:00 a.m.

Session 3 Classes – Dismissal at 7:15 p.m.

Inclement Weather

This is always a tricky subject, so please read through this policy very carefully. If you have questions or concerns about it, please call well before winter weather becomes an issue!

In the winter months, watch the weather forecasts carefully. If there is a chance of ice, snow, sleet, or freezing rain, the action that you need to take is very similar to what you do when there is a chance of bad weather when your child goes to regular school classes.

If classes are cancelled, we will put a message on our website at www.skdp parish.com and as an alert through our parish app, MyParish.

In addition to the website, we will report cancellation information to two television stations: 21 WHP CBS and ABC 27.

In a case of ice or snow when classes are not cancelled, please use your discretion. **Weather conditions can vary even throughout our area.** If the weather is bad enough in your area that you would not leave home for Sunday Mass or for one of your child's extracurricular activities, it may be prudent to stay home.

Medications

If your child needs medication, we recommend that parents administer medication before or after Religious Education classes if at all possible.

If it is necessary that the child's teacher or anyone else at the parish administer medication, the medication must be in the original container with the pharmacist label on it. In addition, a note should be provided by the parent describing the need for the medication and all necessary instructions.

For a student on long term medication that needs to be administered during class time please make an appointment to come in and discuss this with us.

Over the counter medication can only be administered with written authorization of the parent or guardian, and can only be given to the child by the Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE). The medication must be in its original container with the student's name and the amount to be given.

If your child needs medication during regular school classes, it would probably be a good idea to administer that medication for Religious Education classes, as well. Students are required to sit at desks, read, pay attention to their teacher, and retain the material presented, just as they do in their regular school classes. Any assistance that they need in school is mostly likely going to be needed here, as well.

Food and Snacks

Students who need to take medication or who have a medical condition that requires a snack at times, such as diabetes, may bring a snack to class.

We do have a few children in our program who have food allergies, so please refrain from sending snacks in with your children without checking with the Religious Education office first.

Children With Special Needs

We will strive to provide children with special needs with the best Religious Education that we are able. Every effort will be made to help children with special needs participate fully in all Religious Education classes. Adjustments in requirements and curriculum will be made under the guidance of the Pastor, the DRE, and the child's teacher, in conjunction with his or her parents.

If a parent or a professional aide need to attend classes with a child with special needs, we will strive to accommodate that need. In compliance with the Diocesan Youth Protection Program all professional aides must have security clearances. Before a professional aide or parent attends class with a child, please contact the Office of Religious Education to make sure that all security clearance requirements are met for that individual.

Catholic School Students

Students attending Catholic schools receive their religious education at school.

However, as members of St. Katharine Drexel Church, they receive the sacraments here. The Sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation are received here at their home parish.

Children who attend Catholic school are welcome, although not required, to attend Sacramental Preparation classes in second and eighth grade.

Attendance at parent meetings, retreats, and rehearsals is required during Sacramental years for Catholic school students to receive the sacraments.

Sacramental Preparation Class Policies

Students in Sacramental Preparation classes will be given a separate handbook for the Sacramental Preparation programs. Please call the Religious Education office if you have any questions at all about the Sacramental Preparation programs here at St. Katharine Drexel Church.

Formation in Christian Chastity

The Diocese of Harrisburg has published and released a new program that is to be implemented in all Religious Education programs and Catholic schools called "Formation in Christian Chastity". The Introduction to this program reads:

"The work of catechesis is the task of forming a disciple of our Lord, Jesus Christ. For young people who have been brought to the Lord through baptism in their early years, this means a process of formation that accompanies them as they mature, both physically and spiritually. Programs of catechesis address the nature and demands of the Christian life. We find this special life of discipleship in the teaching of the Church, the sacraments, the moral life, and our spiritual life and the wholesome integration of these diverse elements of faith by the person who believes in Christ. One of the key elements of that formation is the proper understanding of how we live out the virtue of chastity."

The Formation in Christian Chastity program is a Parent Centered Program that is integrated into our Religious Education curriculums in grades 1 – 8. In grades 1 – 3 the program consists of solid catechesis in the basic doctrines of the Faith, particularly those that deal with the goodness of God's creation and the family as a reflection of God Himself. In grade 4 the program focuses more on the family. In grade 5 students are taught about respect for all human life from conception until natural. In grade 6 students begin to study the true meaning of love and friendship. In grade 7 students will learn how to attain true and lasting happiness and will examine the true meaning of freedom. The focus of the program in grade 8 is love and responsibility.

Please note that at no time will any biology be taught to our students in the classroom. As the primary educators of your children, you alone have the God-given right to explain the physical aspects of human sexuality to your children. Any topics dealing with sexuality will be limited strictly to Catholic moral teaching as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

As was mentioned above, this program is a parent centered program. Under separate cover, you will receive an envelope containing the Christian Chastity Formation letters for your children's grades. Please read these letters carefully. The directives for parents of children in each grade are presented in those letters.

If, after reading them, you have further questions, would like to discuss the materials further, or would like to be a part of the implementation of this program in the parish, please call Kristine.

Safe Environment Program

In conjunction with the Formation in Christian Chastity program, the diocese has provided us with materials to help our students stay safe at all times. Letters will be provided to parents of first and fifth graders encouraging you to spend some time sharing safety tips with your child. Our goal is to equip both you and your children with knowledge to help keep them safe.

In addition to the letters, our volunteers will be trained to be aware of child safety at all times. In accordance with diocesan policy:

- All volunteers who regularly come into contact with children **must** have the following items. This includes: Catechists, Classroom Aides, Office Assistants, Hall Monitors, and any other volunteers who are on church property while Religious Education classes are in session.
 - PA State Police Criminal History Check
 - PA Child Abuse History Check – Childline/DHS
 - Adult Unpaid Position Disclosure Statement
- Any volunteers who have moved into the area from out of state within the past year **must** also have an FBI clearance
- Clearances are processed at no cost to the volunteer.
- All volunteers **must** complete the online Youth Protection Training and pass the quiz at the end of the program, as mandated by the Diocese of Harrisburg.
- Outside contractors will provide copies of clearances from the agency with which they are employed if they are working in the building while classes are in session.

All Clearance information can be found at:

<https://www.hbgdiocese.org/safeyouth/background-certificates-and-youth-protection-requirements/adult-volunteers/#adult-parish-other-adult-volunteers>

A Fire Drill (Code Red) will take place twice a year in September and April as we renew our policy.

A Safety/Security Drill (Code Grey) will take place once a year as we review our policy.

Parent Involvement in Religious Education

You are the primary educators of the Faith for your children. We are pleased and happy to assist you with this, but ultimately your example of Catholic living is going to influence your child's Faith the most.

Parent/Faith Formation sessions will be held monthly to help parents reflect on their faith journey and help in the Faith Formation process of their children. All parents are invited to attend these monthly sessions.

September
October
November
December

Parent/Parish Faith Partnership Covenant

Here are just a few guidelines to be a strong Christian witness to your children

- Attend Mass with your children on Sundays (or Saturday vigil) and Holy Days of Obligation
- Take your child to the Sacrament of Penance frequently
- Pray with your children and introduce them to the Sacred Scriptures
- Bring your child to class faithfully and on time
- Be sure your child brings all materials needed for class
- Keep current about what is happening at the Parish by reading the Bulletin/website
- Participate in Parish programs with your children
- Encourage your children to participate in Youth Ministry
- Volunteer to help with Religious Education, Youth Ministry, and other Parish Programs