

Faith Formation Parent Handbook



St. Katharine Drexel Church
Mechanicsburg, PA

St. Katharine Drexel Church

Rev. Kenneth G. Smith – Pastor

Office of Faith Formation

Deacon Scott A. Root – Director of Faith Formation

Email : rootscott@skdparish.com

Phone : (717) 697-8716 ext. 228

Michele VanWinkle – Faith Formation Secretary

Email: mvanwinkle@skdparish.com

Phone: (717) 697-8716 ext. 229

Contact Information

Saint Katharine Drexel Church

Office of Religious Education

1 Peter Drive

Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Parish Office Phone Number: (717) 697-8716

We Want to Hear From You!

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

The Aim of the Saint Katharine Drexel Faith Formation Program

- To provide our students with knowledge of the Catholic 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

Faith Formation 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 the Director of Faith Formation to make up class work.

There are no excused/unexcused classes. All missed classes will result in homework being done at home with family catechesis. A student must fulfill all homework assignments 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.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

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

Faith Formation times are 9:40-10:50 am. We ask that students arrive at the conclusion of the 8:30 Mass or by 9:35, so that class can begin on time. We also ask that parents arrive by 10:50 to pick up their students so that those catechists and families who want to attend the 11:00 am Mass can do so without being late.

Students are expected to arrive on time for class. Excessive lateness or early dismissal will be considered an absence and homework will be assigned 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 DRE know.

Teachers are not, under any circumstances, allowed to dismiss students from a class unless the Director of Faith Formation 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.

Except for drop off and pick up times, 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 Faith Formation classes. This is particularly important to remember when your children attend their Faith Formation 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 it is regularly a hardship for you to get your children to Mass in addition to their Faith Formation classes, please call the Faith Formation 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 to 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: 6:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Saturdays: 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 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 Wednesday or Saturday evening.

Home Schooling Policy

Parents who wish to homeschool their children in the Faith may do so with the Pastor's approval by making arrangements with the Director of Faith Formation; catechetical materials will be made available to those who wish to make this commitment. Homeschool curriculum will use online resources.

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

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

Homeschool students preparing for First Communion and Confirmation must attend their Sacramental retreat in-person. Confirmation students also need to complete Spiritual Exercises and Service Hours.

Textbook Policy

The student is expected to be prepared to use the following for each class:

- Student Textbook (provided in classroom, if taken home, this must be returned during the next class)
- Notebook
- Pen or Pencil
- Bible (can be borrowed or brought from home, Provided for Grades 3-5)
- Catechism (Grades 6-8) (can be borrowed)

Tuition

Tuition helps cover the cost of the Faith Formation 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 \$100.00 for the first child, \$25 for each additional child; \$150 FAMILY MAXIMUM plus any sacramental fees. The Sacramental Program has a separate tuition since more materials are required in those programs. Information on the Sacramental Preparation program tuition is \$25 for First Communion and \$50 for Confirmation. These fees are due at the time of registration for Faith Formation for the year.

If tuition payment is a problem, please contact the Director of Faith Formation.

Tuition checks should be made payable to "Saint Katharine Drexel" and should be mailed or turned in to the Faith Formation 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 Faith Formation class and become a distraction. A parent will be asked to pick the items up outside of class time.

- Cell phones are permitted on the grounds for emergency purposes but must be turned off and kept in pockets at all times.
- Personal stereos or iPods
- Cameras
- Handheld electronic games
- Any electronic items
- Magazines
- "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 Faith Formation 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 Faith Formation is not strictly fun. In fact, it is, in most respects, a very serious undertaking.

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

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Discipline

Our catechists 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 catechist will excuse the students from class and send them to the Director of Faith Formation. 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 catechist 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 Faith Formation. If there is a third offense, the student will be removed from class. For the student to be permitted to return to class, parent will be required to meet with the Pastor and the Director of Faith Formation. The parent will need 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 catechist 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, the Faith Formation Coordinator, 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 Faith Formation program may be suggested for the student following the incident.

Arrival and Pickup

All students are to enter the building for classes through the Faith Formation 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 Faith Formation doors will remain locked from the outside while classes are in session even on Sunday mornings.

Parents should park in a parking spot closest to the building and walk their students into the building. **Parents should walk their child to their classroom.**

Catechists are not to dismiss students early, so plan on arriving to pick your child up at the advertised time. **Parents are required to go to the classroom to pick up their child from class.** Students are not to leave the Faith Formation area unless accompanied by a parent or the parent's representative.

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.skdparish.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 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 Faith Formation classes if possible. No one from the Faith Formation team will administer medication to a student. If the medication must be administered during class time, the parent must ask the Director of Faith Formation to remove the student from class and the parent will administer the medication in the Faith Formation area.

If your child needs medication during regular school classes, it would probably be a good idea to administer that medication for Faith Formation 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 most 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 Faith Formation office first.

Children with Special Needs

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

If a parent or a professional aide needs 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 parents attending classes or professional aides must have security clearances. Before a professional aide or parent attends class with a child, please contact the Office of Faith Formation to make sure that all security clearance requirements are met for that individual.

Catholic School Students

Students attending Catholic schools receive their Faith Formation 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 Faith Formation 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 implemented in all Faith Formation programs and Catholic schools the "Virtus" program for Formation in Christian Chastity. The Diocese will work with Virtus to provide the lesson plans each year for our students. Lessons are presented for early elementary, elementary, middle school and high school. For more information see the link below:

https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/protecting_children.cfm

If you have further questions, or would like to discuss the materials further, please contact the the Director of Faith Formation. Contact information is provided on page 3 of this handbook.

Safe Environment Program

In conjunction with the Formation in Christian Chastity program, the diocese has provided us with materials to help our students always stay safe. 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 always be trained to be aware of child safety. 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.
 - o PA State Police Criminal History Check
 - o PA Child Abuse History Check – Childline/DHS
 - o 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.youthprotectionhbg.com/>

A Fire Drill will take place twice a year as we renew our policy.

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

Parent Involvement in Faith Formation

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.

Parents will also be encourage to attend several classes with their students. This will give the parents an opportunity to witness what is going on in the classroom and will hopefully lead to family spiritual discussions.

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 Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, and other Parish Programs