



St. Katharine Drexel Parish
Religious Education Program
Parent Handbook
2018 - 2019

Religious Education Office
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Religious Education Class Schedule (Includes due dates and meeting schedule for 2 nd and 8 th Grade sacramental preparation)	Additional page sent by email

Information printed as of August 21, 2018. Policies, dates and procedures are subject to change.

Religious Education Staff and Contact Information

Staff:

Pastor – Fr. Christopher Picollo
Parochial Victor – Fr. Michael Kennedy
Coordinator – Mrs. Kathleen Del Prato
Assistant Coordinator – Mrs. Meghan Pugh

Office Contact information:

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Be sure to keep this booklet in a safe place for your reference throughout the year.

General Policies

The Religious Education Program is designed to help form our youth in prayer, virtue and the life of the Church. In order to do so effectively, we have set several policies and procedures in place. It is our hope that these ideals will enhance each child's experience in the program, maximize their learning, and, above all else, allow for true encounters with Christ's love.

Mass Attendance with Your Child/ren: All students are expected to attend weekly Mass. Whatever we teach in the classroom will have little meaning if your family is not actively practicing the faith at home. Building a strong foundation in their faith is the most important and meaningful gift you pass on to your child. Children notice by our words **and our actions** how much (or how little) our faith means to us. We ask all parents to be good examples of discipleship at home.

Our Calendar and Lesson Schedule: Parents and volunteers are expected to follow the Religious Education calendar (page 7 of this handbook) and the lesson schedule that is stapled inside each child's textbook. Upcoming events are published in the parish bulletin. Please mark all pertinent dates on your calendar at the beginning of the year.

Communication with the RE Office: The office uses email as the primary form of communication with parents, so be sure we have your correct contact information. Please contact the office as soon as possible if there is anything we need to know regarding your child. **If any special accommodations need to be made, it helps us to know in advance so classes can run smoothly.**

Office Hours: During the RE year: Monday and Wednesday – 9 am to 5 pm; Tuesday and Thursday – 9 am to 4 pm. During class hours, our focus is 100% on overseeing our students. Routine business is to be conducted by phone, email or in person during regular office hours.

Snacks/Food Allergies: Due to the number of food allergies and health codes regarding food in the classrooms, **snacks of any kind are not permitted in the building during RE class time.** (This includes candy, gum and any beverage except water). Any snacks/food items must be finished before entering the building. Catechists and parents are not to bring in or send in any type of food for students.

Tuition and Fees

Number of children	After July 15 th	Early Registration (Before July 15 th)
One child	\$125	\$100
Two children	\$205	\$180
Three or more children	\$240	\$225

Replacement of a textbook is \$20. Replacement of a Bible is \$13 for grades 1-4 and \$28 for grades 5-8.

First Communion Sacramental Offering (for 2nd graders) \$50 – due in April

Confirmation Sacramental Offering (for 8th graders) \$50 – due in January

Tuition Fees provide textbooks, Bibles and classroom supplies for our students; teaching materials for catechists, parent meetings; office and administrative supplies; maintenance of the buildings we use, resource materials, etc.. Tuition is necessary in order for our program to operate.

Sacramental Offerings provide materials & snacks for First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation retreats for students, parent meetings, administrative supplies, program printing, gifts and certificates for sacrament celebrations and Confirmation gowns.

If you are unable to include payment with your registration forms, please contact the office. No child will be denied registration due to inability to pay. Please let us know if this is an issue for your family so that we can work together on a solution.

****Any tuition issues (i.e., tuition is not paid and the parent has not contacted the office or responded to reminders) must be resolved before registration.**

Textbooks and Resources

We use the Sadlier We Believe Catholic Identity Parish series for our students. Parents are encouraged to visit Sadlier's website for activities, games, articles, resources and assessments: <https://religion.sadlierconnect.com/wbcid/webelieveweb.com>

All students receive their own Bible:

Grades 1-2 receive *A Child's Treasury of Bible Stories*, by C.D. Stampley Enterprises

Grades 3-4 receive the *New Catholic Children's Bible*, by the Catholic Book Publishing Corporation

Grades 5-8 receive *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*, by Saint Mary's Press

Our curriculum follows the guidelines set by the Diocese of Trenton Department of Catechesis and Evangelization. Our textbooks cover all aspects of this curriculum, and each catechist is given a lesson schedule to ensure that all necessary chapters are taught.

Family Life Workshop Our curriculum includes RCL's Family Life series in addition to our text books. This series offers a wholesome understanding of human sexuality based upon Catholic moral principles. It includes a parent supplement that will offer some helpful vocabulary in discussing these topics with your child. During our first week of class, every child will receive a letter explaining how the series will be integrated with our Sadlier We Believe textbook.

Preparedness for Class

It is imperative that children come not only to learn, but ready to learn. Your child should come prepared for each class with the following materials:

- Text book (distributed on first day of class)
 - A copy of our lesson schedule will be stapled inside the front cover of every student's textbook.
- Folder (distributed on first day of class)
- Bible – 1st, 3rd, and 5th graders receive their Bible on the first day of class. All other students should bring in the Bible they have already received from the program.
- A notebook to take notes
- A pen or sharpened pencil
- Any completed homework assignments

We ask that students and parents make every effort to attend class and come prepared. The first time a child is unprepared is excused. The second time, we will call home with a reminder. If a third instance occurs, this will lead to a meeting with the Coordinator of the Religious Education to discuss commitment to the program.

Attendance

Students who are ill should not attend class. We ask that a parent notify the RE office and have their child complete the missed chapter work listed on their lesson schedule before they return to class. If a child has excessive absences, the parent will be contacted. Please note that we will review attendance records at the end of April, and in cases of excessive absences we will discuss with a parent whether or not the child is prepared to move on to the next grade level. If there are extenuating circumstances which make regular attendance difficult, please contact the office.

In the case of an absence, parents/guardians should do the following:

- Contact the Office of Religious Education at 609-386-1645, ext. 215 or kdelprato@stkatharinedrexel-nj.org
We will inform your child's catechist of the absence.
- **Make-up work** – Lesson schedules will be distributed on the first day of class and will also be posted on our website. The schedule will indicate which chapters are covered on which dates. Review the missed chapter with your child and, after reviewing the chapter, have your child complete the chapter review in the text. This must be completed by the next class. Completing make-up work does not constitute an excused absence; it is however a necessary means of ensuring each child is prepared for the next class.

Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

Please note that these policies are in effect for the safety of each child in our program, as well as the well-being of everyone who shares our campus during class time. If there is a circumstance which does not allow you to follow these procedures, please contact our office and we will be happy to work with you for a solution to the issue.

- We ask that parents be sure their child arrives at St. Paul School about 5 minutes before we begin so classes may start on time. This will allow the catechist enough time to take attendance and begin the lessons promptly.
- We will open the doors to the building 15 minutes prior to each session. Do not leave your child until you see staff members present.
- Arrival and dismissal takes place in the cafeteria. Each class has a designated table.
- Please park your car in a parking space and walk your child in.
- While children are being dropped off /picked up, your cooperation and courtesy in the parking lot is expected and appreciated. Any discourteous or reckless driving behavior from parents may result in their child(ren) being dismissed from the Program.
- If for any reason, you are dropping off late, please bring your child to the front table in the cafeteria to be checked in.
- We strongly discourage early dismissals. However, in the event of an emergency, parents are expected to come into the building and sign their child out. A written note must be turned in to the coordinator prior to the start of class time.
- We ask that parents be present at the time of dismissal to ensure the safety of all our students. Children in 1st through 4th grades are required to be signed out. If someone other than a parent is signing a child out, we must have a written note and prior notice from the parent.
- Children will be dismissed only to adults who are indicated on their registration forms. Any changes must be provided in writing by the parent.

Behavior

It is important to note here that all of our catechists are volunteers. Additionally, parents put their children in this program with the intention of learning the faith. We ask that all students and parents be mindful of this. Students are expected to be respectful of the adults in the program, as well as of the students around them. This includes some of the following:

- Students must have respect for the subject matter which brings us together. We invite everyone to actively participate in class discussions, keeping in mind that all comments should be appropriate to class topics.
- Foul language of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Cell phone/Entertainment Devices: Students are not permitted to use cell phones during class. They will be collected from any student using them during class time and returned to their parent at dismissal. All other gaming/listening devices, including ear buds, iPods, mp3 players, etc., are not allowed and should be left at home to avoid distractions during class.
- Students must respect each other's personal space and not cause distractions during class. They should keep their hands to themselves at all times. Violence, bullying or harassment will not be tolerated.
- All teachers, volunteers, fellow students and staff members should be treated with respect and kindness.
- The space we are using is shared with the students of St. Paul School. The items in the classroom and in or on desks are not to be touched in any way by the students of the Religious Education Program. Defacing or damaging anything in the building is prohibited and will result in a call home to parents. Restitution or repair of any damage will be expected by the child's parent.
- Infraction of any of the above will result in a call home to parents. Repeated offenses may result in the child receiving home instruction if the coordinator feels it is warranted.

Our Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to our program. Our catechists (teachers), aides, hall monitors, office help, etc., are all parents, grandparents, family members and parishioners who dedicate their time, efforts and talent to our children to ensure they are learning about and growing in the faith. Support is provided to our catechists through classes and Diocesan workshops and other events. Volunteers receive reduced rates in their child/ren's tuition.

Background Checks

All paid staff and volunteers must complete a background check/fingerprinting done through the Diocese of Trenton and attend a VIRTUS workshop, which addresses the topic of child protection. These sessions are conducted at various parishes throughout the Diocese. Once the fingerprint results are obtained and the Virtus training is completed, an ID card is issued to the staff member or volunteer.

Statement Regarding Child Abuse

New Jersey state law requires that any staff member having reason to suspect that a child is the subject of child abuse must immediately report the suspicion to DYFS. This law applies to all catechetical staff personnel.

Sacraments

First Reconciliation celebrates God's loving forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus came to show us the Father who is merciful and loving. First Reconciliation is celebrated for 2nd graders in January. Exact dates are given to families during the fall parent meeting.

First Communion introduces 2nd graders into a fuller participation in God's family of which they are members through Baptism. The faith community of St. Katharine Drexel welcomes these children to The Table of the Lord, as they receive the Body and Blood of Jesus for the first time.

First Communion celebrations take place on the first Saturday in May. This date is given to parents well in advance for planning purposes. Low-gluten hosts are available for those with allergy concerns.

Confirmation is the celebration of God's Spirit, during which our candidates affirm their Baptismal promises. This sacrament is celebrated during the spring of 8th Grade (This date is scheduled for us by the Diocese.) A Parent/Candidate meeting is scheduled early in the year to begin the immediate preparation.

Emergency Closings/Class Cancellations

There will be no Religious Education Classes if the Burlington Township Schools are closed for the day or dismiss early due to inclement weather. Make up classes may need to be added to our schedule to ensure the year's curriculum is covered. If you sign up for our Honeywell Alert System (see below) you will be notified by phone, text or email.

Honeywell Alert System For Emergency Closing Announcements

In the event of unforeseen closings due to emergencies, weather conditions, etc., we use the Honeywell Alert System. All families are to activate their profiles with current emergency contact information, and review information annually. We cannot sign you up for this service. Catechists and volunteers must also activate and keep information current.

We can use the system to deliver a message to you by telephone, cell phone, e-mail, in any combination. You simply need to create an online profile to specify how you would like to be notified.

- Please log on and activate your family profile at <https://instantalert.honeywell.com> Follow the prompts, and be sure to choose 'St. Katharine Drexel – Burlington'.
- Remember to write down your User Name and Password (and keep in a safe place) so you can update your profile at any time. We will not have this information if you should misplace it.

Disclaimer

These policies and procedures are meant to create an environment that inspires faith. This is the goal of all we do in the Religious Education Program. Parents, as their child's first role model in the faith, are expected to support this goal. It is the responsibility of our catechists and the coordinator to ensure that our program allows each child to explore the life of Jesus, his message and learning how to live as his followers. If there are distractions from this goal, the coordinator of the program will deal with the situation as she sees fit. This may include the child receiving instruction at home or their dismissal from the program.