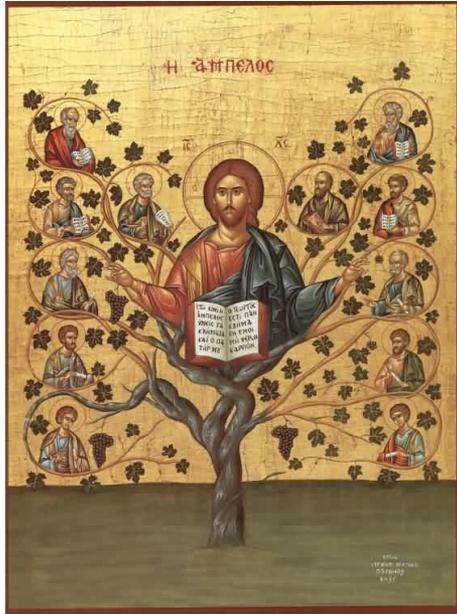


# FAITH FORMATION FAMILY/STUDENT HANDBOOK



*I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me.” John 15:5*

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## CONTACT US

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# WELCOME/MISSION

We warmly welcome your family to the St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church Religious Formation Program for the formal religious education of your child. The registration of your son/daughter indicates your commitment to raise your family with an appreciation of the Catholic faith and an understanding of the promises you made at the child's Baptism.

***“Parents are the primary educators of their children.”*** (General Directory for Catechesis). The example of Christian life lived by parents/guardians is irreplaceable. Catholic families pray, attend weekly mass together, participate in parish activities, and assist in the financial support of the church.

Religious Formation is a ministry of the Catholic Church. We assist families in Catholic faith formation and in sacramental preparation.

Religious formation is our mission. This formation is accomplished through age appropriate experiences and instructions, which build a community of faith both within the religious formation program and our St. Katharine's worshipping community.

## OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To teach the Word of God, the basic beliefs, and traditions of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ To build a faith community.
- ❖ To encourage the student and family to attend Mass. “A family that prays together, stays together!”
- ❖ To call the student and family to service within the community.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

We offer a continuous program for students from first grade through Confirmation. Curriculum is based on Scripture, Roman Catholic doctrine, prayer, traditions, and principles in an age appropriate setting. The effectiveness of our program is dependent upon respect and cooperation between the students, parents and catechists.



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Class:** Class attendance is taken each week and recorded. Students are expected to attend every class. Three or more absences may result in a delay in the reception of sacraments.

**Absence:** Please send email to Maria or Nancy with name of student, reason for absence and teacher's name.

**Make-up Classes:** Classes may not be made up by attending a different session. If your child has been absent, please ask the catechist if there is any necessary make up work. At the catechist's discretion, make-up work may be assigned.

**Homework/Projects:** Homework is given at the discretion of the catechist. The purpose of homework is to reinforce and expand the child's understanding of the lessons and to keep the parents informed and involved.

**Mass:** Students are to attend mass each week with their family. Students are required to ask the Head Usher to stamp their mass attendance booklet after mass.

**Parent Meetings:** Parents of students in **First Communion and Confirmation** classes are **required** to attend designated parent meetings during the sacramental preparation year.

**Calendar of Events:** A copy of the Religious Education Calendar is located on our website [www.skdrexel.org](http://www.skdrexel.org) and in your child's folder.

### **Emergency Information/ Inclement Weather**

When Broward County is under a **Hurricane Warning** our classes will be cancelled. For cancellations for other **weather related and county-wide emergencies** follow the decisions of the Broward County Public Schools.

## **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

### **Fundraisers**

St. Katharine Drexel Religious Education will sponsor fundraisers supporting church and charitable organizations throughout the year. These fundraisers will be pre-approved by the Pastor. There are no exceptions to this policy.

## **Workbooks**

If a book is damaged or lost during the year, a new one will be issued at replacement cost. **The student is to bring this book and folder to class each and every session.**

## **Items Brought from Home/ Lost and Found**

The RE personnel are not responsible for items brought from home that get lost, broken, or stolen. Lost items will remain in the office for two weeks. If they have not been claimed, they will be given to the needy.

# **COMMUNICATIONS**

## **Communication with Family /Student**

The RE office communicates via emails, class flyers, church bulletin, mail sent to home. Please read carefully your emails and all materials sent home with your student (check your child's folder) as these communications may reflect important announcements and/or changes. Look under ***Religious Education*** in the St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church Bulletin page 8 and the church website.

## **Parental Communication with the Office**

Communication between home and the RE department is very important. We strive to have an ongoing relationship with the families of our students. **Please notify the RE office of changes in address, phone numbers, email address, or of any family/health issue that may impact the student.**

Important papers/fees should be delivered to the RE Office.

## **Parental Communication with the Catechist**

The catechists' name will appear on your child's folder. Please contact the individual catechist via e-mail to discuss a student's needs or progress. Before class the catechist will be busy welcoming the students and will not have sufficient time to talk with parents.

## **Concerns**

We encourage you to call or email us, if you have any concerns regarding your child or our program.

Persons with concerns about a catechist should first attempt to address the concern with the catechist. If such attempts fail, contact the parish Coordinator of Religious Education. If one continues to be dissatisfied, contact the Pastor. Only after such attempts have failed should the Office of Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Miami be contacted.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **Custodial Rights**

In the case of divorced parents, the religious education program will interact with the parent who has legal custody of the child. The religious education program ordinarily will deal with the parent having legal custody in matters of absence, lateness, truancy, early dismissal, disciplinary issues, religious education program records, authorization to receive sacraments etc. Access to in-person conferences and the records and information pertaining to a minor child, including, but not limited to religious education program records, may not be denied to a parent because the parent is not the child's primary residential parent. Full rights apply to either parent unless a court order specifically revokes these rights. In the latter case, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide evidence of such a court order.

### **Registrations**

No person on the grounds of race, color, or national origin is excluded or otherwise subjected to discrimination in receiving services within the religious education program. We do not discriminate in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, disability, age, gender, or national origin.

Children will be registered into the religious education program on a first come – first serve basis depending upon space available in the age appropriate class and session requested. Student assignments are for one year. A current Religious Education Registration form is to be completed and returned to the RE office accompanied by full or partial payment. Forms are available online.

Full payment is expected at time of registration. We accept credit or debit card payments. Partial payment may accompany the registration form. In

such case, an agreed upon payment plan is expected. Contact Maria Barni Hopkins, if financial assistance is needed. All religious education fees are to be paid before the last class.

### **Learning Disabilities**

It is the goal of the parish to provide religious education for every child in the parish. In rare cases, the parish may not be able to accept a student into the program because it does not have the resources to meet the special needs of the child. In such rare cases, the parish will assist the parents in finding appropriate catechesis for their child.

Please contact the Coordinator of Religious Education to confidentially discuss ways we can best address the needs of your child.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE**

**The Ten Commandments will guide all behavior.**

Respect is to be given to all adults and students at all times. All individuals involved in the Religious Education ministry will exhibit appropriate behavior in speech and in actions.

### **Conduct Inside or Outside the Religious Education Program**

A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the religious education program that is contrary to the moral code of the Church may be asked to leave the program.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

The St. Katharine Drexel Religious Education program recognizes that the ultimate responsibility for a student's behavior rests with the parents/guardians. Students are to respect authority, which includes adherence to rules, regulations and procedures.

### **Dress Code**

Students are expected to dress appropriately with modesty at all religious education classes and events. The administration reserves the right to determine what is appropriate dress in a Catholic religious education program.

### **Public Display of Affection**

The Catholic religious education program promotes friendship, charity, kindness, love, and respect for self and others. However, inappropriate displays of affection, such as kissing or embracing which connote more than simple friendship, are not permitted in the religious education program or at any religious education program event. The administration reserves the right to determine what is appropriate behavior in a Catholic religious education program.

### **Church Property**

Accidental/deliberate damage to any church property that occurs during religious education classes or events must be reported immediately to the RE office. Willful or deliberate damage to church property may result in dismissal from the program.

**All discipline is based on Christian principles.** Our objective is to reinforce positive behavior.

### **Religious Education Program Policy Right to Amend**

Any student action that is not in keeping with the philosophy/objective of the St. Katharine Drexel Religious Education program is subject to the review of the administration and may lead the parish to dismiss the student from the program. Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this Handbook, the religious education program reserves the right to initiate, change, or modify the policies as needed. Parents and students will be notified of any amendments.

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers are important and contribute to the success of our Religious Education Program. We invite parents/guardians, grandparents, other adult and teen parishioners to become involved in our Religious Education ministry. All volunteers must fulfill the Archdiocese of Miami Volunteer requirements.

Each volunteer must complete an Archdiocese of Miami Volunteer Application form, be interviewed by the Coordinator, sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct, be fingerprinted by the Archdiocese of Miami, and

attend a VIRTUS Workshop, “Protecting God’s Children”. Volunteers are invited to attend Religious Education meetings and workshops. The Archdiocese of Miami offers a Catechist Certification program.

Only approved volunteers may be present in the building during class. Any unauthorized people must exit the building at the start of class.

### **Virtus Lesson**

All students in our Religious Education program will participate in a safety lesson provided to us by the Archdiocese of Miami. This lesson is part of an ongoing effort to help create and maintain a safe environment for children and to protect all children from the potential of sexual child abuse. These lessons were developed by the creators of the *Protecting God’s Children™* program.

This safety lesson will be taught by the child’s catechist or a member of our Religious Education ministry. Our purpose for teaching these lessons is to assist the parents in keeping children safe and to reinforce what to do, if a potentially dangerous situation presents itself. Parents may opt in or out at the time of registration.

For more information on the program, visit the VIRTUS *Online™* website at [www.virtusonline.org/virtus/ParentHandbook.pdf](http://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/ParentHandbook.pdf)

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Please contact the office of Religious Education for a copy of this document.

### **Confidentiality**

Catechists/RE volunteers will keep confidential information entrusted to them as long as no one’s life, health or safety is at stake.

### **Reporting Physical/ Sexual Abuse**

Parents and guardians should understand that State law requires a teacher or administrator who has reasonable suspicion that sexual or physical abuse has occurred to report this to the Division of Children and Family Services. The teacher or administrator who fails to fulfill this responsibility can be charged with sexual or physical abuse, because the silence contributes to the crime.

## **Harassment**

The Archdiocese of Miami religious education programs are committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, our parish will not tolerate harassment of employees, volunteers, or students. Such conduct is immoral and illegal and will not be tolerated.

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, and/or visual, that is based on a person's protected status, such as gender, color, race, ancestry, national origin, age, physical disability, mental condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status or other protected group status. The Archdiocesan RE programs will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

## **Cooperation with Legal Authorities**

It is the practice of the religious education program to cooperate with any local, state, or federal investigators or law enforcement officers that contact the religious education program in the course of any criminal investigation. The religious education program will attempt to notify the parents of any students sought to be interviewed in the course of a criminal investigation on the religious education program premises, unless directed by an investigator or law enforcement officer to the contrary, which is usually the case involving sexual or physical abuse. The religious education program will attempt as well to have a representative present during such an interview, unless this is not permitted by the investigators, which is often the case in investigations involving sexual or physical abuse.

## **Student Withdrawal**

The education of a student is a partnership between the parents and the religious education program. The Church considers the parents to be the primary catechists of their children. Just as the parent has the right to withdraw a child if desired, the religious education program administration reserves the right to require the withdrawal of a student if the administration determines that the partnership is irretrievably broken.

### **Substance Abuse Policy**

The use or possession of illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages, drug-related paraphernalia, or the abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs by any student on parish property or while participating in any religious education sponsored activity is forbidden. Transgression of this rule will result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

Any student selling drugs on church property or at religious education events will be immediately expelled. All Archdiocesan religious education programs are committed to a drug free environment.

### **Weapons Policy**

Weapons are not permitted anywhere on church grounds or at religious education sponsored events. Students who bring weapons, who are in possession of weapons, or who threaten others with weapons or items used as weapons will be expelled from the religious education program.

## **HEALTH ISSUES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Medication Procedures**

The administering of medicine to a child outside the doctor's office or a health institution is a parental responsibility and should not be delegated to religious education program personnel except under unusual circumstances. Only when absolutely necessary medications will be administered:

- The religious education programs will never administer/dispense medicines (including over the counter drugs) to students without specific authorization by both a licensed physician and the parent of the students. An Authorization for Medication form must be completed and submitted by the parent. The name of the medication and dosage must be indicated on this form.
- All medication must be brought to the office with a parent's authorization.
- Only prescription medication can be brought to religious education program and must be stored in a religious education program office.
- Prescription medication must be in the original bottle, which must be labeled and must have the exact dosage.

- All medications will remain in a secure location. (By exception, students who are asthmatic may carry a prescribed inhaler and students with severe allergies may carry a prescribed Epi-pen with them during the religious education program day.) A written log will be kept of dispensed medication.

### **Emergency Treatment**

Emergency contact information provided will be used to notify a family in case of an emergency. When necessary 911 will be called.

Parents of children with severe allergies or disorders have the responsibility of listing that information on the Registration Form under: *Medical Alert and Learning Disabilities*.

### **Emergency Contact**

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide the RE office with accurate phone numbers and emergency contact information.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RECORDS**

### **Student Official Records**

The following records are kept in the official file of the student: attendance, sacramental records, health records and emergency information. Only the contents of the official file will be forwarded to a new religious education program.

### **Student Photos**

The religious education program reserves the right to use student pictures in publications. Any parent/guardian who does not wish his or her child's picture used must notify the Religious Education office in writing prior to September 10th.