

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH

2024-2025

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2133 HEITMAN STREET

FORT MYERS, FL 33901

(239) 223-4757

MICHAEL.REARDON@STFRANCISFM.ORG

Mission Statement:

By teaching our faith, being involved in our faith community, and through our daily example, our Mission is to pass our Catholic Faith to the next generation. Our goal is for our students to become active Disciples of Christ in the world and enable them to live Christ's Mission of Love and Forgiveness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter	2
Calendar	3
Admission & Attendance	5
Attending Sunday Liturgy	5
Arrival & Dismissal	6
Communication & Homework	6
Dress Code	7
Electronics & Valuables	8
Custodial Rights & Contact Information	8
Alcohol	8
Emergency Procedures	9
Medical Emergency	9
Medical Conditions	9
Medication	9
Snacks	9
Registration	10
Illness	10
Special Needs	10
Supervision	10
Discipline	11
Visitors	11
Volunteers	11
Catechist Roster	12
Handbook Acknowledgement & Agreement	14

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you all in good health and high spirits. As the Administrator of our cherished community, I am reaching out to share some thoughts about the vital role Religious Education plays in the spiritual development of our children.

We live in a fast-paced world filled with challenges and distractions that can often lead our young ones astray from the values we hold dear. It is in this context that I wish to emphasize the importance of our Faith Formation / Religious Education program, which is designed not only to impart knowledge of our faith but also to instill a strong moral foundation in our children. Through engaging lessons and interactive activities, we aim to foster an environment where children can explore their spiritual beliefs, ask questions, and grow in their relationship with God.

Religious Education is more than just a series of classes. It is an opportunity for our children and their parents to learn about the teachings of Jesus Christ, the stories of the Bible, and the principles of compassion, kindness, and service that should guide their lives. These teachings encourage our youth to develop a sense of identity rooted in love and respect for themselves and others. Furthermore, they help cultivate a community of support and friendship among participants, as they share their experiences and grow together in faith.

As parents and guardians, you play a crucial role in this journey. I encourage you to become actively involved in your child's religious education and encourage you and your children to actively participate at Sunday Mass. I also encourage you to engage in open conversations about faith at home and encourage your children to participate in the various church activities we offer. Your involvement signals to them that their spiritual development is important and valued. To that end, and because of your input, we have moved the Religious Education Program this year to Sunday in order that you may participate more easily at Sunday Mass and better engage in parish and family activities.

I understand that many of you lead busy lives, but I urge you to make time for this essential aspect of your child's growth. Together, we can create a nurturing environment that promotes spiritual awareness and moral character. In doing so, we not only prepare our children for the challenges they will face but also empower them to become compassionate leaders in our communities.

As we embark on this new season of Religious Education and sacramental preparation, I am excited to witness the growth and transformation of our children in their faith journeys. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the Religious Education team especially to your child's catechists, who volunteer their time and talent to selflessly proclaim the Gospel to your children. We are here to support you and your family every step of the way.

Thank you for your dedication and trust as we guide our children in their spiritual lives. May God bless you and your families abundantly!

In Christ's love,

Rev. Steven J. Clemente

SCHEDULE

Faith Formation

SUNDAYS, 10:00-11:15 A.M.

September 22, 29

October 6, 13*, 20, SATURDAY 26 (All Saints Party/Trunk or Treat),
(NO CLASS: 10/27 Party Moved to 10/26)

November 3, 17, 24 (Turkey Drive Middle School and High School)
(NO CLASS 11/24 for K-4)

December 1, 8 (Pageant Practice), 15 (Pageant Practice), 24 (Christ Pageant)
(NO CLASS: 12/22 & 12/29 Christmas Break)

January 5, 12, 19*, 26

February 2, 9, 23

March 2, 9, 23, 30
(NO CLASS: Spring Break 3/16) 3/5 **ASH WEDNESDAY (Attend Mass w Family)**

April 6, 13, 27
(4/17 **HOLY THURSDAY - Attend Mass w Family**)

May 4 (Final FF), 18*

*** Catechist Professional Days (NO CLASS: 10/13, 1/19, 5/18)**

Sacraments

First Reconciliation: December 7, 2024 (Tentative)

First Holy Communion: May 3, 2025 (Tentative)

Confirmation: TBA

Confirmation Retreat: TBA

Other Notable Dates

November 16 - Youth Rally (High School Youth Group)

November 30 - Missal Changeout (Youth Groups)

December 24 - Christmas Pageant (4:00p.m. Mass)

February 15 - Spaghetti Dinner (Faith Formation/Youth Groups)

March – St. Patrick’s Dinner

April 20- Easter Egg Handout (Youth Groups)

May 11 - Mother Day Special (High School Youth Group)

OCIA

TBA - Rite of Acceptance

March 9 - Rite of Sending/Signing, Rite of Election (Venice)

March 23- First Scrutiny

March 30 - Second Scrutiny

April 6 - Third Scrutiny

April 19 - Easter Vigil

YOUTH GROUP REQUIREMENT

High School Youth Group Attendance.

For all those in both Confirmation 1 and Confirmation 2 classes, the students will be required to participate in the High School Youth Group. Student are required to attend a high school youth group meeting (Sundays at 1:00pm, usually twice a month) at least once a month. Certain dates and events are required.

ADMISSION & ATTENDANCE

There is no discrimination to some form of Faith Formation on the basis of race, sex, national origin or handicapping conditions.

In order to receive a quality religious education, regular attendance is required. If an absence is necessary, please call or e-mail the Religious Education office to report it and bring a note when your child returns.

If a student is absent twice without prior notification by parent/guardian, the student's catechist will contact you by phone or email.

After two absences (and/or four late arrivals), your child will be required to make up material which will be given by the catechist. The catechist will contact you by phone or email with the make up assignment.

After three absences, your child's catechist will call to arrange a meeting with the DRE before the session of your child's return. Your child's progress in the program will be reviewed at that time.

ATTENDING SUNDAY MASS

Participation at Mass every Sunday is extremely important for all Catholics because this is the time, once a week that we receive the Holy Eucharist and are given strength to live our lives in Christ throughout the week. This is the highest point where we directly share in Christ's sacrifice. Weekly attendance at Mass is required for all those in Faith Formation. Your student will be given a piece of paper to bring with them to Mass. Their name, their catechist's name, and date must be on the paper. At the end of Mass, they need to bring the paper to the priest and have him put a stamp on the paper for that particular week. If they attend another parish on any Sunday, they must show their catechist a bulletin from that parish to show they attended Mass. **Families of Faith Formation will be required to participate in a monthly Mass in roles such as Altar Server, Lector, Greeter, User, or EM's**

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Arrival: We ask that your child never be unattended in the parking lot. Do not drop your child off in the parking lot, for their safety you must park and walk your child to the entrance door of the building and release them to their catechist.

Dismissal is at the Church at 11:15: Your child will not be released from the church unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Regardless of grade, a parent/guardian must personally retrieve their child from the church to attend the 11:30 Mass as a family. Your child will not be released unless accompanied by a parent/guardian/ or someone else designated in writing on the **“Parent/Guardian Consent to Release Minor to Third Party and Release of Liability/Agreement to Indemnify”** form.

If someone other than the parent/guardian or parent/guardian substitute is to pick up the child, this change must be given in writing to the Director prior to the session in question. Catechetical staff are not permitted to drive students home.

Rainy Day Dismissal: If raining at 11:10am, students will not be brought to the church. Dismissal will be in Xavier Parish Hall.



Please come to Xavier Hall **ON TIME**. students go straight to class with their catechists at 10:00a.m., so please arrive before then. We don't want to miss a single minute!

COMMUNICATION & HOMEWORK

Communications (by the director/catechists) with the parents/guardians will be handed out by the catechists to the parents/guardians when they arrive to attend Mass with their children at the time of dismissal. This is also the time to check with the catechist if there are any homework assignments, projects to be completed, or any other information the catechist needs to address.

DRESS CODE

1. Apparel shall be adequate in both length and coverage to be considered appropriate for class.
2. Pants shall be worn fastened and at the waist with no undergarments showing.
3. Pants with holes, tears, etc. may not be worn, if in the Director's judgment, they may cause a disruption to the school environment.
4. Shirts or blouses shall be appropriately fastened in accord with the design of that shirt or blouse. The length shall extend beyond the waist level.
5. Clothing that exposes underwear or body parts in an indecent or vulgar manner is prohibited.
6. Transparent or see-through tops, bare midriff, strapless, low-cut clothing, or tops and outfits that provide minimum coverage or are of a suggestive nature are prohibited; halters, backless dresses or tops, tube tops, tank tops, muscle shirts, or any clothing which may be distracting are prohibited.
7. Any articles of clothing or jewelry that could likely cause injury-such as chains, bracelets, rings, chokers with or without spikes, or studs-are prohibited. Wallet chains of any length are prohibited.
8. Shoes must be worn at all times.
9. Apparel, emblems, insignias, badges, or symbols that promote the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or any other illegal activity are prohibited.
10. Apparel or symbols which may be gang-related may not be displayed on a student's person or in the student's possession.
11. Gang-related tattoos, or other tattoos that may cause a substantial disruption to the educational environment as determined by the director, are prohibited.
12. Adornments that, in the director's judgment could cause injury, be a safety risk or cause a disruption to the faith formation environment may not be worn. Examples of prohibited adornments include, but are not limited to, hoops or rings attached to the nose, eyebrow, cheeks or lips.
13. The wearing on property of hats, caps, headgear (including hoodies) or sunglasses. Exceptions can be made by director for special faith formation projects or events.
14. Clothing with slogans or advertising which by its controversial or obscene nature disrupts the educational setting is prohibited.

15. Hair coloring or style that may cause a substantial disruption to the educational environment, as determined by the director, is prohibited.
16. Long, oversized jerseys are prohibited.

ELECTRONICS & VALUABLE ITEMS



Cell Phone, Smart Phones, Electronic Games or other electronic devices should not be brought into the classrooms unless requested for an assignment by a catechist. If any is brought into the classrooms, it must be turned off.

Any items of any considerable value should not be brought into faith formation classes. St. Francis Xavier is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

CUSTODIAL RIGHTS/ CONTACT INFO

The director should be informed by the custodial parent/guardian of the rights of the noncustodial parent/guardian as these pertain to the child's participation in the program as well as release from the program. Legal documentation, if available, should be kept in the student's file.

CHANGE OF CONTACT INFORMATION

Please notify the director of any changes in your address, phone number, e-mail, or any other contact information. This is important information for us to have in case of important notices or EMERGENCIES!

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is not allowed on parish premises when students are present.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, accident, or illness, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. If unreachable, we will try to contact the emergency contact. This contact information is taken from what you provided on your child's registration form.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY INFORMATION

You should have filled out the "Request for Medical Procedure Affidavit, Medical Release of Liability and Indemnification" form which contains the medical emergency release. This form must be reviewed every year and bear the original signature of the parent/guardian. Any changes to the record are made in writing by the parent/guardian.

MEDICAL CONDITION OF STUDENT

The catechist should be informed about any student who has a special medical condition which could flare up in the session or which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, possibility of seizures, learning disability, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, etc.). **Confidentiality Policy:** Outside of those required to know in the Faith Formation Program, a student's medical information will not be released or shared with any other entities except for pertinent emergency/medical professionals in the event of an emergency.

MEDICATION

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) should be administered to, or taken by, the student during the parish religious education program. If an exception has to be made, the parent/guardian must provide a written request and directives.

SNACKS

Parents should not bring food/snacks to religious education classes because some children may have medical restriction or allergies to certain foods or ingredients.

REGISTRATION



Registration should have been completed on registration weekends in August after all Masses. If you were unable to make the registration weekends, forms were available in the parish office and on the parish website: www.stfrancisfm.org. Forms needed to be turned into the Parish Office by September 11th for the early discount which is \$55 per child or \$80 for a family of 2 or more. Sacramental Prep is an additional \$35 in year receiving sacrament.

All forms returned after September 11th are subject to the regular fee structure. (\$75 child/\$100 family. + \$50 Sacramental Prep)

ILLNESS

If your child is exhibiting any symptoms of sickness they are not to attend Faith Formation. Please be sure to contact the religious education department to inform their catechists.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

All students are encouraged to participate in the Religious Education at St. Francis Xavier. If your student has any special needs which might prevent them from participating in the classes, please contact the director to discuss other accommodations, materials, and resources available.

SUPERVISION

Supervision is not provided for your child before 10:00a.m. or after 11:15 (the times of the Faith Formation Program). This is why you must not drop off your child, but sit with them until they are taken by the catechist. This is why it is very important to make sure you are at the church by 11:15am prior to the end of class to attend Mass with your child.

DISCIPLINE

A catechist may require additional time for catechesis if a student is excessively late or has excessive absences. A catechist may also keep a student after the session for misbehavior. Prior notice will be given to parent/guardian before the session the student has to stay after.

The Religious education program reserves the right to remove a student from the group session or from the program:

- if it is believed that the student would benefit significantly from a one-on-one or smaller group situation, or if the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others
- if temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR VIOLATION OF DRESS CODE, ELECTRONICS POLICY, OR FAILURE TO COMPLETE HOMEWORK, OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR:

1st Offense: Verbal Warning and Parent Contact

2nd Offense: Parent Conference with Director

Fighting, verbal abuse, drugs, alcohol, weapons, or inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated.

VISITORS

No unauthorized persons are allowed in the area where the catechetical sessions are taking place.

VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers that have contact with children or vulnerable adults must be fingerprinted and attend Safe Environment Training with the Diocese. Refer to the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy available at the parish office.

2024-2025 Faith Formation

Catechist Roster

K & 1:

Mrs. Stacie Kolnicki & Ms. Djenane Fevrier

Communion 2:

Ms. Claudia Torres

3 & 4:

Mrs. Margaret Tramutola

5 - 8 Middle School Youth Group:

Mr. Khris Kolnicki, Mr. Pat Himschoot, and

Mrs. Linda Murnane

Confirmation 1:

Mrs. Sarah Pollard

Confirmation 2:

Mr. Wayne Dickie

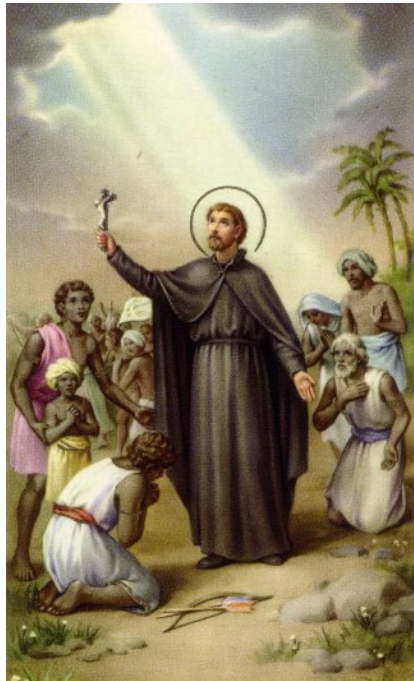
Sacramental Prep (Holy Communion, Confirmation):

Ms. Claudia Torres, Mrs. Djenane Fevrier,

Mr. Wayne Dickie, and Mr. Michael Reardon

Adult Faith Formation: Mr. Michael Reardon

Contact: Michael Reardon
Director of Religious Education
(239) 223-4757
michael.reardon@stfrancisfm.org



St. Francis Xavier Feast Day: Sunday, December 3, 2024

Francis Xavier's good friend, Ignatius of Loyola, through his tireless persuasion, finally won Francis Xavier to Christ. Francis then made the spiritual exercises under the direction of Ignatius, and in 1534 joined his little community (the infant Society of Jesus). Together at Montmartre they vowed poverty, chastity and apostolic service according to the

directions of the pope.

From Venice, where he was ordained a priest in 1537, Francis Xavier went on to Lisbon and from there sailed to the East Indies, landing at Goa, on the west coast of India. For the next 10 years he labored to bring the faith to such widely scattered peoples as the Hindus, the Malaysians and the Japanese. He spent much of that time in India, and served as provincial of the newly established Jesuit province of India.

Wherever he went, he lived with the poorest people, sharing their food and rough accommodations. He spent countless hours ministering to the sick and the poor, particularly to lepers. Very often he had no time to sleep or even to say his breviary but, as we know from his letters, he was filled always with joy.

Francis went through the islands of Malaysia, then up to Japan. He learned enough Japanese to preach to simple folk, to instruct and to baptize, and to establish missions for those who were to follow him. From Japan he had dreams of going to China, but this plan was never realized. Before reaching the mainland he died. His remains are enshrined in the Church of Good Jesus in Goa.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 2024-2025
HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT**

Parent Name _____

Phone _____ Alt. Phone _____

Email Address _____

Child/Children Names _____

Catechist _____

This handbook is presented to our families for the purpose of providing the information deemed necessary for the proper management of the Religious Education Department. Our purpose is to provide a holy, safe, and healthy environment for all of our students.

Please take time to read this handbook with your children.

I have read this handbook and agree to its guidelines for spiritual development, attendance, behavior, drop off and pick up policies, and other policies.

Parent/Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Guardian (Signature) _____

Date _____

