

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH

2026-2027

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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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.

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 Religious Education year! We are blessed to partner with your family as we embark on another wonderful journey of faith, community, and spiritual growth.

As the primary educators of your children in the faith, your involvement is the foundation of our program. Our dedicated catechists and volunteers are eager to support you by creating a nurturing environment where our youth can encounter Christ, dive deeper into the Scriptures, and learn the beautiful traditions of our Church.

This year, our theme focuses on building a personal relationship with Jesus and living out our faith through daily acts of kindness, prayer, and service. We have planned an engaging curriculum filled with interactive lessons, family liturgies, and a variety of opportunities designed to bring our community closer together.

We cannot separate your child's opportunity to learn and encounter Christ solely by participating in our Religious Education program here at St. Francis Xavier. Central to that encounter with Christ is participating at the 11:30AM Sunday Mass along with greater St. Francis Xavier Community. We welcome and encourage you to pray with us weekly, while demonstrating your commitment to the faith by your example of worshiping with the community that is communally praying for you and your child. Thank you for participating in this important component of the Religious Education Program here at St. Francis.

Educating your children in the faith may seem like a daunting task, rest assure you are not alone in doing so. We here at St. Francis are here to help you and pray for your success. This of course starts at home and with you as parents. If we can help you in any way to meet your goal of learning about the faith or if you know of an area of faith that can further assist you, please feel free to reach out to us.

Thank you for your continued commitment to your child's Catholic education. Let us hold each other in prayer as we begin this new ministry year, asking God to open the hearts of our children to His love.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Steven J. Clemente

Pastor, St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

SCHEDULE

Faith Formation

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

September 13 (Parent Orientation - No Students), 27

October 4, 11, SATURDAY 24 (Trunk or Treat), (NO CLASS: 10/25
Moved to 10/24)

November 1, 8, 15, 22 (Turkey Drive Middle School and High School)
(NO CLASS: 11/22 for K-4 & 11/29 no class everyone)

December 6 (Pageant Practice), **13** (Pageant Practice), **24** (Christmas Pageant)
(NO CLASS: 12/20 & 12/27 Christmas Break)

January 10, 24, 31 (NO CLASS: 1/3 Christmas Break & 1/17)

February 7, 28

2/10 ASH **WEDNESDAY (Attend Mass w Family)**
(NO CLASS: 2/14 President's Day & 2/21 **Spaghetti Dinner**)

March 7, 14

(NO CLASS: Spring Break 3/21 & 3/28 Easter)

(3/25 HOLY THURSDAY - Attend Mass w Family)

April 4, 11, 18, 25

May 2 Final FF, May Crowning. Meet for 11:30 Mass followed by end of year
Pot Luck Lunch.

*** Catechist Professional Days (NO CLASS: 10/18, 1/17, 5/16)**

Sacraments

First Reconciliation: December 9, 2026 , 5:30 PM

First Holy Communion: May 1, 2027 (Tentative)

Confirmation: TBA

Confirmation Retreat: TBA

Other Notable Dates

November 14 - Youth Rally (High School Youth Group)

November 28 - Missal Changeout (Youth Groups)

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

January 16 - DOV Middle School Retreat at SFX

February 20 - Spaghetti Dinner (Faith Formation/Youth Groups)

March 13— St. Patrick's Dinner

March 28- Easter Candy 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 Masses (Youth Groups)

OCIA

TBD - Rite of Acceptance

TBD- Rite of Sending/Signing, Rite of Election (Venice)

February 28- First Scrutiny

March 7 - Second Scrutiny

March 14 - Third Scrutiny

March 27 - 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 which is Sunday Mornings at 10:00am. There is Sacramental Prep one Sunday a month which starts at 9:00am. There will also be required volunteer hours on different dates for various parish events.

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 you are out of town any weekend, they attend another parish and must show their catechist a bulletin from that parish to show they attended Mass while out of town. **PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN MASS!** Sign up your child to be an Altar Server, or they (and parents) can be a Lector, Greeter, Usher. Parents can inquire about becoming an EM.

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 are brought into the classrooms, they 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, diverse learner, 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 4th for the early discount fee of \$55 per child or \$80 for a family of 2 or more. Sacramental Prep is an additional \$40 in year receiving sacrament.

All forms returned after September 4th are subject to the regular fee structure. (\$75 child/\$100 family. + \$55 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.

2026-2027 Faith Formation

Catechist Roster

K & 1:

Mrs. Emma Jean-Baptiste, Jose Vargas Castillo,
and Mrs. Alexandra Ocampo

Communion 2:

Ms. Claudia Torres, Ms. Djenane Fevrier

3 & 4:

Mrs. Lisa Gelman, Mrs. Denis McGee

5 - 8 Middle School Youth Group:

Mr. Ryan Arciero, Mr. Ken Weyandt,
Mrs. Linda Murnane, Mr. Pat Himschoot

Confirmation 1:

Mr. Jeff Shott, Sr. Rosa

Confirmation 2:

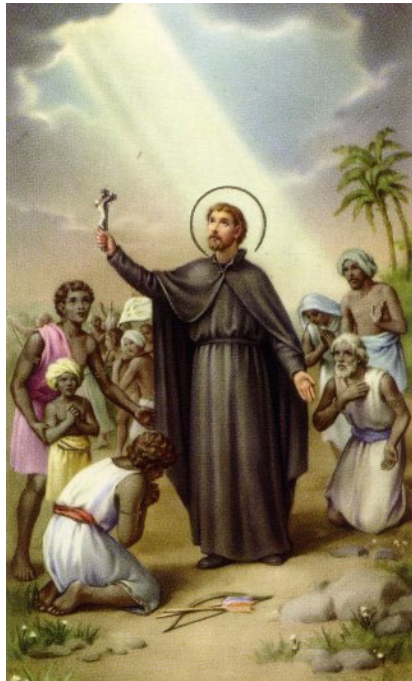
Mr. Wayne Dickie

Sacramental Prep (Holy Communion, Confirmation):

Ms. Claudia Torres, Ms. Djenane Fevrier,
Sr. Rosa, Mr. Wayne Dickie, & 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, 2026

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 2026-2027
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 _____

