

St. Maximilian Kolbe
Parish Religious Education Program

Parent & Participant Handbook



300 Daly Drive
West Chester, PA 19382
610-399-9642
Fax:610-399-4684
Website: www.stmax.org
Email: stmaxreligioused@comcast.net

Class Times

Tuesday: Afternoon Session 4:45-6:00 PM
Tuesday: Evening Session 6:30-7:45 PM

Dear Parents,

The catechists and I welcome you and your child/children to our Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)! We look forward to partnering with you in deepening your child's faith life and relationship with our Lord. Our teaching will support and reinforce the faith that you have in your everyday family lives; through training in prayer, exploration of the Bible, and receiving the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist. Parents, we encourage you specifically to give your children the opportunity to meet Jesus regularly at Sunday mass. The habit of communing with God in the context of your parish faith family gives all of you a time of retreat and restoration from the vigor of life. It develops in your children an understanding that you depend on God for guidance and give Him thanks for his many blessings.

Please take the time to peruse the enclosed Parent & Participant Handbook and make yourself familiar with our policies and procedures. In particular, we urge your cooperation regarding attendance, punctuality and expected student behavior. Our standards and expectations encourage respect and consideration from your children towards one another and their volunteer catechists. In addition, please pay close attention to the arrival and dismissal procedures.

Thank you for entrusting your children to us each week. Our goal is to provide a vibrant faith encounter in which each student recognizes and strengthens his/her own God given identity and gifts. We aim to develop their understanding that from their baptism into the Catholic faith they have been commissioned to become disciples of Jesus Christ and instill an appreciation for being active members of His Church.

Sincerely,

Roberta Dainton
Director of Religious Education

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The purpose of the handbook is to set forth the guidelines for those that participate in the St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish Religious Education Program. By enrolling your child into our program, you agree to support and abide by the provisions outlined in this handbook. Parents are therefore encouraged to discuss these provisions with their children to ensure that all parties understand the requirements and obligations of their participation in the Parish Religious Education Program.

Program Philosophy

Canon Law states that:

“Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation” (Can. 774 §2).

The General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis resound the same sentiment. St. Maximilian Kolbe’s Religious Education Program recognizes and embraces parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children as they strive to fulfill this special role. Our mission is to assist parents in providing sound catechesis on the catechism and teachings of the Catholic Church so that their children will be formed in the faith of the Catholic tradition. This is accomplished by providing parents with a variety of resources and programs that will enable their children to cultivate a deep appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian in today’s changing world. The Parish Religious Education Program provides children with ample opportunities to live and experience their faith through catechesis, service, community and worship.

Parish Mission Statement

The parish of St. Maximilian Kolbe is a community of followers of Jesus Christ, linked by the common bond of Baptism, sharing in the celebration of the Eucharist, and all Sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church. Our parish reach encompasses all people. We serve as witnesses to the Kingdom of God on Earth. Our parish will continue to develop programs for all age groups that will strengthen the presence of the Lord in the individual and community. Our parish celebrates and embraces the values and character of St. Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of families, journalists, prisoners, the chemically-addicted and the pro-life movement.

Parish Leadership

Pastor: Rev. Msgr. Robert Carroll
Parochial Vicar: Rev. Marc Capizzi

Permanent Deacons:

Mr. William Hickey
Mr. Lawrence Brandon
Dr. Alfred Mauriello

Director of Religious Education: Mrs. Roberta Dainton
Secretary: Mrs. Gloria Floyd

Principal of Parish Catholic School: Ms. Anita Dixon

PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Attendance

The faith formation received in the programs is consecutive and cumulative in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is imperative that children attend their program sessions regularly. The following procedures and policies will apply to our program regarding attendance:

1. If your child is unable to attend a session or will be arriving late for any reason, a parent should **notify the office by calling 610-399-9642**. Please be sure to leave your child's name, grade level, and the program for which they will be unable to attend.
2. If your child fails to report to a session and no phone call is received, then the absence will be recorded as unexcused.
3. After the second unexcused absence, the program director will contact the parents to notify them that the child is close to exceeding the permitted number of absences (3) per year and may be required to repeat the grade level should unexcused absences continue.
4. Any student who is absent may be given a Make-Up Work form upon his/her return. The teacher will have recorded the missed lesson and activities and the student may need to make them up at home prior to the next testing. Parent signature is required on sheet.
5. Any participant accumulating (6) UNEXCUSED ABSENCES MAY BE DISMISSED FROM THE PROGRAM. The participant may re-enroll the following school year. Upon re-enrollment the participant will be required to repeat the previous grade level that was not completed. This proceeding may delay the reception of sacraments.
6. Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to the program. In addition, parents should be in regular contact with their child's catechist in an effort to obtain assignments and keep their child's formation up-to-date when possible.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

ARRIVAL:

- The front doors will be open 15 minutes before the session time begins.
- Participants should arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of a program and go to the Multi-Purpose room to gather with their classmates before opening prayer and dismissal to classrooms.
- All students will enter the school building through the FRONT doors only.
- Two car lanes will be directed for the drop-off of children: the inner bus lane closest to the school building and the outer lane to the left of the bus lane divider. Designated aides/volunteers, wearing traffic vests, will assist children with crossing traffic from the outer lane.
- If parents need to walk their children into the building please park in the upper gym lot and use steps to enter the front doors.

DISMISSAL:

- Parents should park their cars in the designated parking spots. The lane closest to the school building (the bus lane) will not be used at all during dismissal. It will be left entirely clear as families exiting the school building will be crossing to the parking lot.
- Doors will open 5 minutes prior to dismissal following closing prayers.
- All students will be picked up from their classrooms. This ensures that every student is released by the teacher to an authorized adult.
- All parents will list the names of Carpool Drivers for their child/children on the Admission Slip, and teachers will keep the list of authorized people in the classroom. Children will not be released to anyone not on the list unless a note is sent in granting permission to an alternate adult.

Late Arrival

Sessions begin promptly at their designated times. Classroom interruptions due to lateness distract all students from instruction and the incoming student faces the difficulty of trying to catch up. It is best for all if students are present and ready for instruction by the start of class.

Students who arrive after the school building door has been closed must report to the Religious Education Office to obtain a late slip. It is strongly recommended that children arrive at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled class time.

Early Dismissal

Early dismissal should be an unusual occurrence. If it is absolutely necessary, call the office in advance to notify us and send with the student a written note of request to the classroom catechist. Catechists may require work missed because of early dismissal to be made up.

Snow Emergency & Cancellations

In the event of severe inclement weather we will post closings on the PREP website (www.stmax.org) and send out an announcement by email to parents. St. Maximilian Kolbe's PREP classes follow the West Chester School District Snow Policy. Therefore, if West Chester School District is closed for the day, closes early or cancels after-school activities due to inclement weather, the PREP classes will automatically be cancelled as well.

Enrollment After Extended Leave

Our program involves incremental learning; that is each year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants complete the program consistently through consecutive years of curriculum.

ONE MISSED YEAR:

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year will be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment into the program. (e.g., a student who leaves the program for a period of one year after completing Grade 3 and re-enrolls in the program when they are in Grade 5 will be placed into a 4th Grade class.)

MORE THAN ONE MISSED YEAR:

Any participant who voluntarily leaves the program for two or more consecutive years must fulfill the following requirement:

- Under direction of the Director of Religious Education (DRE) the participant shall complete the first year missed over the summer months through parent-supervised home study. The student will show understanding of the material learned through regular assessments that are submitted to the DRE. A final exam will be given under the supervision of the DRE.
- After completing the homeschooling summer program, the student will be re-enrolled in our PREP system at the next grade level. (e.g., a student who leaves our program after completing Grade 3 and re-enrolls when he is in 6th grade will need to complete with the parent home based catechesis for Grade 4 over the summer. Upon completion of the Grade 4 program, the child is accepted into the fall Grade 5 class to continue his/her faith formation.)

Non-Custodial Parents

It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the Parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish will request these documents in the beginning of the year. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both parents to provide that document to the Parish immediately.

Discipline

The teaching of religious truths needs an atmosphere of trust and love so that each student may have a vital experience of their faith. Mutual respect is therefore imperative in every classroom between the students and catechists. Students shall be:

- Respectful in attitude and speech to their catechists and classmates,
- Cooperative in classroom discussions and activities,
- Prepared with workbook, folder and any given homework or assignment,
- Dressed appropriately,
- Responsible for the care of other students' property,
- Reverent in church liturgies,
- Not wearing hats in school or church

- Not eating or snacking
- Not texting or playing with cell phones or electronic devices

The Parish Religious Education Program offered by St. Maximilian Kolbe is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching. The program has NO TOLERANCE for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form.

In the event a participant engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist's attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the following action may be taken and at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education:

- First Incident: The student will be removed from the session and the parent or guardian will be immediately notified by phone by the program director. The program director may schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, student, and catechist to discuss the matter.
- Second Incident: The student will be removed from the session and be suspended from the program for a period of one session. The parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Prior to returning to the program the program director will schedule a conference with the parents, student, and catechist to further discuss the matter.
- Third Incident: The student will be removed from the session and may be dismissed from the program. The parents or guardians will be immediately notified by the program director and required to pick up their child. Following a conference with the program director, parents, student, and catechist, the parents will be provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to complete the current year's material by home-schooling their child. In either case, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made. However, St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

Electronics & Technology

We realize that electronic devices such as cell phones have become a necessary tool for communication with your children, especially for working parents. However, it is the policy of this program that such devices must be turned off during class time. If a student is seen playing with a cell phone or any electronic device, it will be taken away immediately and returned at the end of the night to his/her parent.

Assignments

Catechists in all grade levels may assign take-home work in the form of written work, activities, memorization, practice or study. As our partners in the faith formation process, it is expected that parents will supervise the completion of these assignments.

Although faith formation includes the academic assessments for grades 3-6; at all grade levels we look for indications of their faith in forms of experience, expression, and life application! Participation in other Parish events, liturgies and groups as well as family prayers and traditions will give them a well-rounded and meaningful faith experience.

Service Initiatives

Catechists may invite participants to engage in service activities as a means of deepening the formation process. This is a required part of the 6th grade Confirmation preparation. These activities will most likely take place outside the scope of the regular catechetical sessions. In the event that a catechist elects such an option, he or she will provide the participants with a description of the activity and whatever permission or release form(s) would be required.

Students are also urged to assist their less fortunate neighbors through active participation of parish or PREP food drives, mission outreach and national emergencies which occur from time to time.

Workbooks

Every participant is provided a workbook at the beginning of the year and is required to bring the workbook to EVERY program session. The PREP office will lend a workbook to a student for an occasional forgotten workbook but after two sessions, the student will be required to purchase a new workbook for \$20.00.

Sacraments

Preparation for the reception of a sacrament is a time of prayerful reflection and discernment. A participant's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in his or her positive attitude toward the preparation process. Thus proper attendance and behavior are expected. *Participants exhibiting chronic absences (3 or more unexcused absences), lateness, or who are a persistent discipline problem may have their reception of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and/or Confirmation deferred until the following year or later.*

Mandatory Parent Meetings are scheduled in October for those students receiving Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation. Attendance is REQUIRED at such meetings.

Archdiocesan policy requires that a child receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) in the parish that their family is registered.

Tuition

Tuition is a necessary part of the PREP program to ensure that excellent catechetical resources are available. It is also necessary to lessen the Parish subsidy that it provides for each student, to cover the cost of the administration of the program, and to offset costs incurred by usage of the facilities.

In the event that your child is dismissed from the program due to excessive absences, lateness, problem behavior, or for any other reason for dismissal, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.

Communication

CALENDAR:

Parents are provided with a yearly calendar at the beginning of the program year. This calendar is subject to change during the course of the year. Parents will be notified of changes.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Parents should feel free to contact the DRE regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The Director may be contacted using any of the means listed below:

- Religious Education Office Phone Number **610-399-9642**
- Email address: **stmaxreligioused@comcast.net**

Direct communication with your child's catechist is also a necessary component of the catechetical process. Parents are encouraged to contact or meet with their child's catechist to discuss any concerns or provide information that will enhance the learning experience. If the teacher does not provide their contact information, call the Director to make arrangements to meet or speak with your child's catechist.

STUDENT FOLDER

Parents are asked to check the Student Folder weekly for class communication, service opportunities or Parish information.

EMAIL UPDATES

The Director will send emails with program updates and announcements to keep you informed of all events and deadlines, opportunities and information about the PREP program and Parish events that would be appropriate for your children.

Final Note

The program director reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.