

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Office of Faith Formation



Parent Handbook
2026-2027

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Dear Catechists, Parents and Guardians, and Students,

We have been given many gifts by God. Parents are very thankful for the gift of their children; children are thankful for the gift of their parents and all the members of their families. All of us are grateful for the gift of our faith, a faith that makes us aware of God's loving presence in our lives - a God who loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to show us how we are to live, treat each other, and receive His forgiveness. We know that Jesus is present in a special way in all the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. That is why the most precious gift a parent can give their children after the gift of life is the gift of Jesus present in the Eucharist as we celebrate the Paschal Mystery.

We at Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Parish are truly blessed with a staff of dedicated catechists who want to assist parents in forming our children in the faith. They do this by transmitting the truths of our Catholic faith in word and example. We are taught not only the essential knowledge of the faith, but even more by lives of Christian action. This is where our catechists are outstanding.

With the knowledge of the faith our children receive in the classroom, the grace and assistance they receive in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) and the lived example given them by parents and catechists, I am confident we can continue to grow as a family into a Eucharistic Community of loving action and service in Christ.

May Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Parish always be a holy place where all can experience the loving presence of Christ.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Joseph M. McLafferty
Pastor

Faith Formation at Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Parish is one of the most significant aspects of parish life. The goal of our program is to help parents begin in their school age children the lifelong process of formation in the Roman Catholic Faith. To that end, an integrated experience of traditional classroom catechesis, personal prayer, communal worship, sacramental preparation and community-building activities will be provided. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this experience will ultimately lead to a transformation into the fullness of life in Christ and His Church.

Office Location and Hours

The Office of Faith Formation is located on the top floor of the Faith Formation Building. When classes are in session, the hours are:

Monday - Thursday: 10:30 pm - 2:00 pm

When classes are not in session, please call first before stopping by. We are closed Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Classroom Locations and Times

Six sessions with various grades are scheduled:

Monday 5:00 - 6:30pm / 6:45 - 8:15pm

Tuesday 5:00 - 6:30pm

Wednesday 2:30 - 4 pm / 5:00 - 6:30pm

Thursday 5:00 - 6:30pm

All classes are ninety minutes long and run for thirty weeks (mid-September to mid-May).

Expectations of the Student

- Regular attendance at **Mass*** on Sundays and on the Holy Days;
- Frequent reception of the Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (after 2nd Grade);
- Timely arrival, consistent attendance, cooperation and participation in class for the full 90 minutes. **At the least, bring a pencil and the textbook each week;**
- Appropriate clothing (please no cleats, boy's hats or immodest dress) and respectful behavior in the classroom and church;
- Completion of all required assignments, including knowledge of grade level prayers and vocabulary;
- Successful performance on various forms of academic evaluation

* Mass – Participation in the Celebration of the Paschal Mystery
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The Role of the Parent

As *the primary educators of their children* and as reflections of Christ in today's world, Catholic parents are expected to act as role models and live their faith in the home, in the workplace and in the community at large. More specifically, it is the parent's responsibility to:

- **Be registered members of our parish**, support it financially and participate actively in the life of the parish community including regular attendance at Sunday Mass;
- Support their children in fulfilling the above-listed expectations;
- Attend required Parent Meetings during Sacrament years;
- Provide the office with **Baptismal Certificates** and, where applicable, records of prior Faith Formation;
- Complete a confidential "**About My Child**" *Form*, especially if their children have any physical, learning or emotional disability, serious food allergy or long-term medication and submit current copies of IEP/504 plan;
- Write excuse notes or notify the office whenever their children are absent;
- Provide the office with updated information, such as new cell numbers, e-mails, emergency contacts, etc;
- Keep the office informed of any special situations which may affect their child's performance in the classroom;
- Provide for the timely transportation of their children to and from class each week; (Other activities should be scheduled at times which do not conflict with class time.)
- Complete *Media Authorization Forms*, *Carpool Forms* and other information requested by the office

The Role of the Catechist

The catechist, your child's teacher, is a Catholic in good standing, whose ministry is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in a classroom setting and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit by providing the appropriate atmosphere for spiritual, intellectual and moral growth. To achieve these goals and to teach all the grade level concepts outlined in the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*, a variety of teaching methods are used. Catechists are strongly encouraged to continue their own formation in the faith by attending workshops, certification classes, retreats, etc.

Sacramental Preparation

In addition to grade-level academic requirements, students in second grade prepare for the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, and students in eighth grade generally prepare for Confirmation. The relevant dates for the parent meetings, rehearsals and sacraments are listed on the colored annual calendar. The parish has a ***Mass Attendance Policy*** for all students in a sacramental preparation year. Under this policy, students are to give an index card with their name, grade and catechist's name on it to be given to the celebrant priest or deacon at the end of Mass each weekend. Students attending Mass at another parish are required to have the church bulletin from the visited parish signed by the celebrant or deacon of the Mass. The children should bring the signed bulletin to class the following week and hand it to their catechist. **The student's name, grade and catechist should be clearly written on the front of the bulletin.**

In order to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist (First Penance and First Holy Communion), all students must be completing their ***second year*** of formal Faith Formation, regardless of age.

To receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, students must have completed seventh and eighth grade. Several additional requirements will be explained at the spring Confirmation meetings for students and parents.

Non-traditional Catechesis

It is not unusual for students to begin formal Faith Formation later than first grade. In many cases these children will begin at a grade lower than their public school grade. Any gaps must be discussed with the Director, so that a plan tailored to cover any academic deficiencies can be implemented as quickly as possible.

Make-up classes for students who have missed several years of Faith Formation may be offered beginning in the fall. Students in these classes are also co-enrolled in their normal grade-level classes. Older students preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion will attend a six week session in the fall and again in the spring.

Procedures for Drop Off and Pick Up

Children should be dropped off at the main entrance to the Faith Formation Building 5-10 minutes before class begins. ***Please be sure your children enter the building safely*** by walking them to the front door. Due to New Enhanced Security Procedures, parents are not allowed to enter the building during dropoff. Parents must come to the classrooms at the end of class to pick up their child. This procedure is not only a safety measure, but also an opportunity to dialogue with the catechist at the **end** of class.

Security

Your child's safety is a top priority. Therefore, only staff members and students are allowed downstairs or past the office upstairs while classes are in session. When parents arrive at dismissal time, they are requested to wait upstairs in the vestibule until the door is opened at the end of classes. **Parents picking up children early are to report to the office, sign them out and wait there while a staff member retrieves them from class.**

It is extremely important that the office has all the information necessary to reach parents at a moment's notice, in case a child becomes ill or injured, or in case there is a building-wide emergency. **Please keep the office updated with all phone numbers and e-mails, and keep your cell phones on when your child is in class.** Also, please give us emergency contacts that are local and accessible. The first contact attempted will be to the child's home phone, then the mother's work or cell phone, the father's work or cell phone and, finally, the designated emergency contact person and parent e-mail.

Your catechist has been instructed to release your children only to you or your designated "car pool" person. **Please inform your child of who will be picking them up and instruct them to go home only with that person.** Call the office, 227-1710 x3, if the plans suddenly change. If there is someone who is ***not*** allowed to pick up your child, please inform the catechist **and the office.** If the parents are separated, the Director should be informed by the custodial parent of the rights of the non-custodial parent regarding both the pick-up policy and the child's participation in the program. **Visitors are never permitted in the classroom without the prior consent of the Director.**

Health and Safety

Please avoid sending any food, drinks or medications in with your child. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and put away during the entire class time. Class parties are allowed only during the last thirty minutes of the last class before Christmas and at the last class in May. If your child has significant allergies or medical conditions, please complete the *"About My Child" Form*, the information on which will be kept completely confidential and given only to your child's catechist.

As required by the Archdiocese of New York, *Crisis Management Plans* for all sessions are kept on file. Emergency procedures, phone numbers and in-house personnel (e.g. catechists certified in CPR, etc) are listed on the plan in the event of various crisis situations. One parent per class is designated as the phone liaison, who will contact other parents in case of a building emergency. Fire drills are held in early fall and late spring.

The office addresses minor situations requiring medical attention with supplies included in a typical First Aid kit.

Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program (ASEP)

In accordance with the *Bishop's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* promulgated in 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we are committed to implementing procedures designed to ensure the safety of the children in our Faith Formation programs. To that end, the Director, her Assistant, all catechists, class assistants, hall monitors and office volunteers have undergone background checks and received a written Code of Conduct and training through attendance at a *Safer Spaces Seminar*. At some point during the year, your child's catechist will discuss the sensitive topic of sexual abuse with the class at an age-appropriate level. Materials for discussion have been provided by the Archdiocese. Any parent wishing to discuss any concerns with the Director or the catechist is certainly most welcome to do so at any time.

Evaluation and Student Progress Reports

There are several ways in which a catechist may assess the progress your child is making on his or her individual journey of faith. It is reasonable to expect students to spend up to 30 minutes per week on assigned readings, written exercises or studying for quizzes and tests.

Grade-level prayers should be recited (and lived) every day.

Some catechists have frequent short quizzes, and others administer unit exams less often. Many evaluate learning through games and oral exercises. In the lower grades, assistants frequently take students into the hallway to recite their required prayers. If a program-wide assessment is given, review sheets will be distributed well in advance of the exam date. If necessary, students are given an opportunity to retake the exam.

The Archdiocesan *Student Progress Report*, distributed in January and in May, reflects **classroom performance only** in the categories of academic achievement, homework, class participation, effort, behavior, attendance and tardiness.

The Director reserves the right to retain students in their current grade if, upon consulting with the catechist, it is deemed that the child's academic performance, **attendance** or attitude in class is unsatisfactory. This decision will be indicated on the child's Student Progress Report in May. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the office to determine the best resolution to the situation, so that the child may continue on grade level during the following year.

Re-Registration Procedures

Re-registration for the next academic year will begin in March. ***Your child will not be automatically re-enrolled.*** Once registration opens, seats are filled on a first-come first-served basis for all current families. Full tuition must be paid at the time of registration. In June, registration will be opened to new families who have already enrolled in our parish. Waiting lists will be kept throughout the summer. Returning parents wishing to enroll a new child into the program (usually first grade) may do so by providing a Baptismal Certificate and paying the fee.

Missing Documentation and Areas of Concern

If information required by the office is missing, or if there is an ongoing situation with your child in the classroom that needs to be resolved, the parent will be notified. If necessary, a written notice will be sent home. A copy of this notice will be kept in the office until the missing forms (such as Baptismal Certificates or transcripts from former parishes) have been submitted or until your child's behavior, attendance, performance, etc. has been satisfactorily addressed.

Additional Fees and Late Registration

New students will not be enrolled after October except for transfers from another Faith Formation program or parochial school. Late Registration begins September 1st (\$25 late fee). The lost book replacement fee is \$25. The First Reconciliation/First Holy Communion fee is \$50 and the Confirmation fee is \$100. Both are due upon registration.

Tuition reimbursement

Families withdrawing from the program prior to the first day of class will receive full reimbursement. Once classes begin, no reimbursements will be given.

Cancellation of Classes

Our office follows the Arlington Central School District snow policy. If Arlington cancels classes for the day ***for weather related reasons***, so do we. If Arlington has a two-hour delay, our classes remain in session. If Arlington cancels afternoon activities ***for weather-related reasons***, our classes are also cancelled. Cancellation notices for Saint Kateri Faith Formation classes can also be found on the local radio stations and our parish Facebook page. **Please do not call the office directly** for this information.

Archdiocesan Themes and Objectives

Grades 1-8

Grade 1

Theme: God is our Father who loves us.
Jesus is the Son of God who tells us about our Father.
The Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.

Objective: To develop an awareness of God the Creator, who gives us life and grace and promises us eternal life through Jesus.

Prayers: Sign of the Cross
Our Father
Hail Mary
Doxology (Glory to the Father...)
Part One of Apostles' Creed

Grade 2

Theme: Jesus nourishes us and strengthens God's life of grace within us.

Objective: To present Jesus as the model for Christian living and to introduce the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and Eucharist.

Prayers: Act of Contrition
Parts One and Two of Apostles' Creed
All Grade 1 Prayers
Simple Responses at Mass

Grade 3

Theme: Jesus continues His life and work through His Church.

Objective: To deepen the child's understanding of the Church and to help the child experience the Church as Christian community.

Prayers: Entire Apostles' Creed
The Rosary: Joyful Mysteries
All Grade 1 & 2 Prayers

Grade 4

Theme: As God's people we are called to live as Jesus did, choosing a life of love, characterized by obedience to God and service to others.

Objective: To help the children form their consciences according to the teachings of the Catholic Church and to learn the basis of Christian morality as taught in the Bible.

Prayers: Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy...)
Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary
All Grade 1-3 Prayers

Grade 5

Theme: Through the sacraments the Church celebrates Christ's saving actions in our lives.

Objective: To help the child experience and understand the rites of the sacraments and so become a more conscious and active participant in the Church's sacramental life.

Prayers: Gloria
Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary
All Grade 1- 4 Prayers

Grade 6

Theme: God's saving actions are found throughout history. The Bible, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records God's plan of salvation.

Objective: To understand the Old Testament as the revelation of God in the history of a people, a revelation fulfilled in the New Testament.

Prayers: Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary
All Grade 1-5 Prayers

Grade 7 – 4 Parts

Personal Growth, Part I: The Human Person

Themes: The growth and change experienced during adolescence are part of the unfolding of God's plan for our development as fully Christian persons.

Objective: To develop in the young adolescent a sense of self-worth and self-respect nurtured and strengthened by a knowledge of God's love.

To acquaint the young adolescent with an understanding of the virtues necessary for a life of goodness and faith.

Jesus and the Gospel Message

Theme: The gospels reveal Jesus as the Savior and Risen Lord who calls us to advance the kingdom of God through discipleship.

Objective: To broaden the young adolescent's understanding of the gospels through a study of their formation, themes, message and literary aspects.

To help the young adolescent grow in a personal relationship with Jesus by encountering Him in the Gospels and learning to live His message.

Sacraments

Theme: The mystery of Christ continues in the Church through the sacraments, which are visible signs of the love and saving action of Jesus.

Objective: To help the young adolescent understand, appreciate and celebrate the continuing presence and saving action of Jesus in the Church.

To lead the young adolescent to a full and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Human Sexuality

Theme: Sexuality is a gift from God. It embraces psychological, spiritual and physical characteristics of men and women. We human beings need to integrate our sexuality into our total personality in order to develop into the persons God has called us to be.

Objective: To help the young adolescent appreciate the gift of sexuality.

To assist the young adolescent in developing correct and positive attitudes concerning sexuality.

To clarify for the young adolescent how the gift of sexuality can be misused.

Prayers: Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary
All Grade 1-6 prayers

Grade 8 – 3 Parts

Personal Growth, Part II: The Human Community

Theme: Developing relationships with others and God is essential to becoming our true selves.

Objective: To help the young adolescent understand the elements which are essential to developing positive relationships.

To help the young adolescent understand that true community is built on honest, loving and respectful relationships.

Church History

Theme: Jesus' life and mission continue through the Church, the community of believers called by God and empowered by the Spirit to be the sign of the Kingdom of God.

Objective: To deepen the young adolescent's knowledge of the history of the Church.

To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Morality

Theme: Through our relationship with Jesus, we grow in an ever-deepening awareness of who God is, who we are, and how God calls us to live. Catholic Christian morality gives direction to our response to God's call.

Objective: To help the young adolescent grow in an understanding of the moral responsibilities arising from one's relationship with Jesus.

To help the young adolescent understand what conscience is and how to form his or her conscience according to the Catholic Faith.

To help the young adolescent learn basic concepts of morality and develop skills for moral decision-making.

To enable the young adolescent to recognize the role of the Spirit and the witness and guidance of the Catholic Christian community in moral living.

Prayer

Theme: Prayer is an expression of our awareness of and response to God's presence, love, goodness, and saving power.

Objective: To assist the young adolescent to grow in a desire for, and appreciation of, prayer as essential to the Christian life.

To help the young adolescent, through the presentation and experience of a variety of prayer forms, to develop the ability to pray.

Prayers: All Grade 1-7 Prayers

At the conclusion of 7th and 8th grades, students will take a program-wide exam to evaluate their knowledge of the concepts, prayers and vocabulary as set out by the Archdiocese of New York's *Guidelines for Catechesis*. Review sheets containing the required information will be distributed to the students. ***Much of the information will consist of material covered in earlier grades.*** Parents are strongly encouraged to help their children study their review sheets. **The student is responsible for reviewing this information outside of the classroom.**