

Frequently Asked Questions about Faith on Fire 2022-2023

Saint Maximilian Kolbe Parish

Here are responses to some of the most frequently asked questions/comments we have heard from our parents.

What will Faith on Fire look like in 2022-2023? We invite you to look through the Faith on Fire 2022-2023 Formation Chart at www.saint-max.org/faithonfire that outlines the formation journey over all grade levels. The chart will explain what our formation options are for the 2022-2023 year and will help you choose your favorite options. Note: There are some changes from last year, but the overall model remains the same.

Will family formation permanently replace traditional weekly faith formation classes in the Fuel with Pflaum and Spark Programs? We have seen benefits of the family model in the last couple of years in how it has begun to transform family faith life, encouraging parent/child conversations about God and the Church. While we were excited to receive positive comments about the Faith on Fire formation model, we understand that this format is challenging for some families who have struggled to establish a reliable schedule for the lessons and are looking for ways to engage their own children. We are continuing to explore this model further and ask for your patience as we make changes to better support you.

I struggled with the family home study lessons last year. How should I continue in 2022-2023? We suggest that you reach out to Mary Lou or Joan so that we can better understand the hurdles you are encountering with the weekly lessons. Sometimes we find that parents are not aware of certain resources/ideas available to help with particular struggles. We know you are uncovering layers of difficulty that naturally come with teaching your own children, especially if you don't feel well catechized yourself. We will continue to work on ways to address this in the year ahead. Please know that there are many families who participate in this program and all are at different stages of the faith journey. It is difficult for us to know where each family is at unless someone reaches out to us. The more you share your experience with us, the better we can support you.

How many in-person offerings will there be in 2022-2023?

In 2022-2023, our 'Blended Learning' track for Fuel with Pflaum and Spark will include **monthly** in-person meetings for a total of eight sessions. These family gatherings are for parent and child; children will be with catechists, learning about our monthly themes while parents will attend a separate presentation. Age level grouping of children will be determined by the number of catechists we can secure. Note: There will also be a home study track in the Fuel with Pflaum program for families who prefer the traditional learn at home model. These families will pick up materials four times throughout the year. Additionally, weekly in-person Mighty Max sessions will be offered for young children 18 months-four years, Ignite will be offered bi-weekly for youth in grades 6-8, and High School will meet weekly.

Will the home study model continue because of COVID restrictions? While the uncertainty of COVID restrictions two years ago necessitated the move to a home study model for Fuel, COVID was not a factor in continuing this model in 2021-22 and will not be a factor in 2022-2023. What is driving us to continue this model? Did you know that children decide whether or not to leave the faith around 12-13 years of age? (From: Going, Going, Gone, The Dynamics of Disaffiliation of Young Catholics. A study by St. Mary's Press of Minnesota, Inc. In collaboration with the Center of Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). This alarming statistic and others like it have been cause for us to consider what is happening in our own parish. We have seen that students are disengaged, parents are exhausted, and volunteer catechists are hard to come by. We also asked ourselves, "Are students sticking around after Confirmation?" Sadly, a majority were not actively engaged in their Catholic faith after being confirmed. Our goal is to provide a formation experience for our parish youth that promotes life-long engagement in the Faith. Our team feels like this family model has greater potential than our traditional efforts in reaching this goal and we have full staff support in piloting this model during a more traditional year.

What if parents don't want to be bothered and remove their children from religious instruction all together?

Wouldn't it just be better maintaining the status quo? It is likely that some parents will decide to forego instruction rather than participate in this program, and others may even move to another parish that offers a weekly classroom model. However, we are obligated to offer our families our best effort to ensure these years will penetrate the hearts of our children and their families. Otherwise, we have failed at doing our job in supporting you!

Furthermore, we are in the business of a faith in which we cannot see and hope in a future we don't fully understand. This model will likely transform over time into something totally different than what we will experience this coming year. It will certainly take time to see the fruits of this journey. However, I can say that fruits have already been realized. Some families have found this family model has strengthened their faith life, enabling them to transform the family activities they already do into encounters with God.

Why are most of your in-person offerings for junior high youth and older? It seems like you are not looking out for the families with younger children.

It is no surprise that junior high years are times of greater influence from peers and the surrounding community, and some teens suffered significantly from the isolation that COVID brought on. Over the last couple of years we have found that students have responded positively to the Ignite sessions and many 'opened up' in their small groups about some important topics. Does this mean that younger children don't need interaction with their peers in the faith? Definitely not! However, facilitating faith discussion in the home during the younger years is the catalyst for children to open up about heavier faith topics when they are older. Put into perspective, a traditional weekly classroom setting is a total of 30 hours of instruction over the year... that's 0.3 % of a child's life over the course of a year. Children benefit mostly from the important DAILY teachable moments of everyday life that lead the family into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no comparison! **Don't forget** that weekly in-person Mighty Max sessions will be offered for young children 18 months-four years beginning in September. Look for Mighty Max registration to come out in August.

Tell me more about Ignite in the 2022-23 year! Some great changes are coming for Ignite next fall! Sixth grade students will be joining in on the fun with our seventh and eighth graders! The move from monthly to bi-weekly meetings last year was a positive change that created more time for interaction with peers and faith leaders. Ignite will transition back to being the junior high youth group instead of an in-person formation option next year. This change will allow Ignite to be an additional faith enrichment opportunity, helping these youth build a solid faith community with their peers.

I enjoy teaching my children about the faith, but I want my children to hear about the faith from others as well. We will continue to offer monthly in-person gatherings in our Fuel program for children in early childhood through grade 8, and their parents. Age level groupings will be determined by the number of catechists who volunteer. There will be parent/child interaction for a short period of time during the events.

God intended for us to be together, learning from each other. Why are we doing lessons in the home? Our Church teaches that the parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. The faith is first learned in the home. That's why the Church calls the home the Domestic Church. There are numerous Church documents that support the Domestic Church as the primary setting to pass on the faith. However, this does not mean that the Church does not support this effort. We are absolutely obligated to support our families and we are thrilled to continue coaching you through the formal years of formation and beyond.

Have more questions about the Faith on Fire Formation Program at St. Max?

Please contact Mary Lou at 513-777-4322 ext.120 or mbaker@saint-max.org