



# **2023-2024 CRE Parent Handbook**

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*The Mission of Faith Formation is to form our young people as Catholic Christians spiritually, socially and in service to others.*

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### **Goals of Faith Formation:**

As stated in *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (USCCB, 1997) the goals of Child and Youth Ministry are: “1. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. 2. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community. 3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”

Along with those goals, Faith Formation strives to:

- Empower parents as the primary religious educators of their children
- To inspire a life long desire in our young people to continue in their faith formation
- To engage students in the Scriptures in a meaningful, relevant way
- To foster a culture of service and justice inside and outside of the Parish
- Make young people feel more welcome in the Parish community
- Ensure that every young person *wants* to come to CRE and desires to be Confirmed

### **Catholic Religious Education (CRE) program description**

The religious education program for kindergarten through tenth graders is designed to build upon the instruction these students learned in previous religious education programs and prepare students as they continue their journey towards adulthood and the Sacrament of Confirmation in the eleventh grade.

The program has been designed to recognize that many of the students have come from different religious education backgrounds. The students also have different questions about their faith life and different interests. Keeping this in mind, we also aim to reinforce the four pillars of our faith in keeping with the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Christian prayer, morality, liturgy and sacraments and the creed.

### **Curriculum**

Kindergarten students will be using *Allelu* from OSV that uses a multisensory format of activities, games, prayers, crafts and stories that nurtures young children’s natural tendency to seek a relationship with God, reinforcing a strong sense of community and love.

First, third, fourth and fifth grade students are using the *Discover* program from St. Mary’s Press that uses the Bible as the primary text. Every lesson is structured around a key story from the Bible, with children looking up, engaging in, and discovering deeper connections from Scripture to Church teaching. Third, fourth and fifth grade students should make sure to bring the *Catholic Children’s Bible* they received in second grade. If they did not receive a bible or if it was misplaced, please contact the Formation office.

Second grade uses the *Blessed* program for First Reconciliation and First Communion from Dynamic Catholic as well as the *Catholic Children’s Bible* from St. Mary’s Press which is theirs to keep. More information on Blessed will be given at the First Reconciliation/First Eucharist orientation meeting on October 9 or 10.

Sixth, seventh and eighth grade will be using the *Catholic Connections Handbook*, also from St. Mary's Press. In addition, we will watch various *Alpha for Youth and Alpha Life Revealed* videos. *Alpha* is a series of interactive sessions that explore the basics of our faith. The talks are designed to encourage conversation and explore the basics of the faith in a friendly, open and informal environment. Each grade will have a specific focus for the year: sixth will look closer at the Bible; seventh at the life of Christ and eighth grade at the last part of the Creed. In addition, we will rotate through sessions based on life issues that middle school students face and how to approach them through the lens of faith. This year, both sixth and seventh grade students will receive the *Catholic Youth Bible* which is theirs to keep. Seventh and eighth grade students should bring the Bible they received last year to class. (If it was left behind, we will do our best to return it to them on the first night of class)

Ninth and tenth grade will utilize a program called *Equipped for Life* from EQ Saints to help them grow as mature disciples of Christ. Tenth grade will also be using a program called *In Pursuit* from YDisciple which helps them look at ways to be the person God called them to be.

### **Prayer Services**

In recognition of the primacy of prayer in our faith tradition, we will begin each CRE session with a group prayer service in the Church for grades K-8. Students are to enter the main doors and meet in the Church. Parents and parishioners are invited and encouraged to attend these prayer services.

9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students will pray either together in Rooms 141/142 or in their rooms with their groups.

### **Prayer**

Our prayer life as Catholics is a varied and beautiful tapestry. It is essential to our faith life and growth. We use many forms of prayer to communicate our wants, needs, desires, hopes, dreams, thanksgiving, and petitions. All of our students are exposed to different forms of prayers in CRE, including those memorized prayers we rely on throughout our lives.

To help students with their prayer life we ask that families pray with their children daily. To help the children learn their prayers, each Kindergarten through 3rd grade student will be given a prayer sheet. Please review the prayers on the sheet with your child/ren each night, initial in the box at the bottom of the sheet, and return them each Monday to their catechists (teachers). Each time your student turns in their prayer sheet they will be put in a drawing for a small monthly prize. For those students in kindergarten through 2nd grade, an additional prayer will be added after Christmas break. Please continue to practice the old prayers in addition to the new ones.

### **Hall Monitors**

We are blessed with wonderful spaces in our school and building in which to conduct our CRE classes. However, it is rather spread out so we would like to invite parents to serve as "hall monitors" during the K-8 CRE classes. The hall monitors are simply another adult presence in

case a catechist needs more supplies or a child needs to go to the bathroom etc. If you are available to help out in this capacity, please sign up at <https://stjohn23rd.ccbchurch.com/goto/scheduling/33/public>

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all CRE sessions is required. We recognize that young people have a lot of time pressures, but we also feel that their Religious Education should be a top priority for their time. If a student will not be able to attend, a parent should notify the Formation Office at least one hour before the start of class to count as an excused absence. *Even though an absence is marked as excused, make-up work will still need to be completed.* Because of the nature of how the sessions are set up (small group discussions, group activities, etc.) it is really to the advantage of the young people to be present for all the sessions in order to really form a community of faith with their peers and to get the most out of the experience.

### **Tardiness/Early Release**

The sessions will begin promptly at 6:00. If a student is to be more than 15 minutes late for a class, please let us know.

If a student needs to leave class early for any reason, a note from a parent needs to be brought into the Formation office *before* the start of class. If a parent or someone designated by the parent is to pick the student up, that person needs to check into the Formation office to meet the student. If the student has a drivers license and is to drive him or herself, that must be indicated in the note and the student is to check into the Formation office before leaving the building.

In case of emergency, parents should call the Formation office at 262-284-2102.

### **Student Behavior**

In order for CRE to be an enriching experience for all of those involved, it is important for students to be respectful of the catechists, the other students and the space. While the majority of students adhere to that, the Formation Advisory Committee has implemented a behavior policy for those few who do become disruptive and/or disrespectful in any manner.

The policy is as follows: On the first offense the student will be sent to the Formation office and their parents will be called. On the second offense, the parents will again be called, but this time to pick up their child. On the third offense, the student will need to be home schooled for the rest of the year.

Certain behaviors will mean immediate removal of the student from the program. These behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Physical or verbal abuse of the catechist or other students
- Possession or use of alcohol and/or drugs and/or weapons of any kind
- Vandalism

It is equally important in a program of this type that the students participate in the sessions, which have been designed to foster discussion and questions.

### **Cell Phone Use During CRE**

The use of cell phones to make or receive phone calls, text messages or other uses are forbidden during CRE sessions *unless expressly allowed by the catechist in a limited capacity*. Students who bring a cell phone to CRE must keep it in his/her pocket, purse or backpack. If there is a family emergency, the Formation office should be contacted. If a student is found to be using a cell phone during a CRE session (unless it is part of class), the phone may be confiscated and parents will be notified as stated in the previous policy.

### **Inclement Weather**

In case of bad weather, please check the web site at [www.stjohn23rd.org](http://www.stjohn23rd.org) Class cancellations/changes will be posted on the home page. You may also tune in to local TV and radio stations for class cancellations. Every effort will also be made by the Formation office and the catechists to contact the families by phone, e-mail and/or text if class will be cancelled.

### **Safeguarding All of God's Family**

As per the Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and guidelines from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, we are participating in the Safeguarding All of God's Children program. This program contains several components that pertain to Religious Education programs. All personnel and volunteers who work with children and youth, including catechists, are subject to criminal background checks and required to attend an abuse awareness training session.

In addition, schools and religious education programs are called on to provide age-appropriate abuse prevention education in all classrooms to teach children to recognize, resist and report abuse. It is expected that in each classroom, every year, there will be at least one presentation documented to assist children in acquiring and enhancing skills to prevent abuse. In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, we are required to use the *Circle of Grace* program. If you would like to know when the session will be presented for your child's grade, to review the materials or to opt out of the session, contact the Formation office.

Finally, catechists and other volunteers are considered Mandatory Reporters per the Archdiocese. This means that they are to exercise reporting responsibilities for any suspected physical or sexual abuse of minors. For more information on *Safeguarding All of God's Family* contact the Director or check the Archdiocesan web site at [www.archmil.org](http://www.archmil.org).

### **Learning In Faith Together (LIFT) Family Faith Sessions**

This year we are again offering special formation opportunities to all members of our parish, regardless of age or family status, through our LIFT Sessions. This will be an exciting opportunity to grow together as the Catholic faith communities of St. John XXIII Parish. During the session, we will have a chance to pray and learn together as we examine our theme for the year "Eucharist: Source and Summit". During this event, we will explore what that means to us in

our celebration of the mystery of the Eucharist as sacrifice, meal and real presence.

The same session will be offered two different times. **Please note that all sessions will be at St. Peter's in the cafeteria.** CRE students and families are required to attend **ONE** of these two sessions instead of CRE that week:

- Sunday, February 18 at noon
- Monday, February 19 at 5:30pm



In your information folders is a short registration form letting us know when you plan to attend with your family. Please return it to the Formation Office by February 12 so we can plan accordingly. Space at each session is limited so sign up early to get your first choice. You may also register on-line at <https://qrco.de/lift24> or by scanning the QR code above.

### Family Faith Enrichment Sessions!

St. John XXIII Parish is excited to offer the following “Family Faith Enrichment Sessions” to all of our parishioners. As a family that participates in our CRE program, we ask that you attend at least one of these sessions during the 2023-24 academic year in addition to one of the LIFT (Learning in Faith Together) sessions in February. Of course, you are welcome to attend more than one! All sessions take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month (except LIFT and December) from 6:00-7:30pm in rooms 141/142.

For planning purposes, please sign up for the sessions you plan to attend at least one week in advance. You may register online here:

<https://stjohn23rd.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/113/responses/new> (or scan the QR code)

- September 25 – “Celebrating Christ Present”
- October 23 – “Scripture & Liturgy”
- November 27 – “With These Gifts: Eucharist as Thanksgiving”
- January 22 – “Praying Into Sunday: Eucharistic Adoration”
- March 25 – “Do This in Memory of Me”
- April 22 – “Gathered by Eucharist: Sent in Mission”



For a more detailed description of each session, look in the parent folder or go to <https://stjohn23rd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/family-enrichment-sessions-23.24.pdf>

### Retreats\* **UPDATED POLICY!**

Retreats are an important part of any person’s faith life, but especially during one’s teenage years as students face more and more pressures from school, work and extracurricular activities. A retreat is an opportunity to get away, pray, reflect, and grow closer in your relationship with Jesus.

Retreats/days/evenings of reflection requirement: Middle school (6, 7 & 8) are asked to attend a retreat one time during those three years while high school (9 & 10) students should attend at

least one retreat/reflection *each year*. These will be offered several times during the year. Students will also have the option of attending Archdiocesan and district events to fulfill this requirement and/or participate in the Ministry Apprenticeship. High school students are also welcome to participate in retreats at a Place to Be Spirituality Center (<https://www.aplacetobesc.org/>) as long as the total number of retreat hours for the year is at least five hours. Middle school students may participate in retreats at A Place to Be with a parent and the Center's permission. (Some retreats may not be at a level for middle school students.)

Dates listed below are scheduled dates, which fulfill the retreat requirements. More dates *may* be added during the year. The Formation office will inform families as these opportunities come up. Please check the bulletin and web site for updates. ([www.stjohn23rd.org/retreats](http://www.stjohn23rd.org/retreats)). Flyers for the retreats listed below are in the folders that will be distributed at the parent meeting. *Registration forms are available on the web site and may be submitted electronically or mailed in.* If you would like additional copies mailed, contact the Formation office.

### **2023/24 Retreat dates**

September 30, 2023 *John Bosco Youth Day* at Holy Hill – (Middle and High school)

March 16, 2024. *Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally* at Carroll University (middle and high school)

April 20, 2024 *Living Eucharist Day of Reflection* (middle and high school)

Participation in a mission trip and/or the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) fulfills the retreat requirement for the appropriate grade level. Students attending the *Men of Christ* or *Women of Christ* Conferences with a parent may apply that experience towards their retreat requirement after writing a short reflection. Please contact the Formation office for details.

### **Ministry Apprenticeship**

The Ministry Apprenticeship is a way to help our young people grow in their faith and connect with the parish. The “apprentices” are asked to participate in a ministry of the parish during the year with a “mentor”. The mentors will be responsible for training the apprentice as well as communication and scheduling. Not only will the young people learn about a specific ministry, each person will have additional contacts in the community to help them in their spiritual and personal growth. If you are already active in a parish ministry as an altar server, choir member, summer CRE aide, usher etc. or are interested in becoming involved, contact the Formation office for more information.

### **Communication/Remind**

Communication between the Formation office, parents and students is very important. We will periodically send out emails of what is happening and post information in the bulletin. Also, check the parish website often for updates, registrations and other information. In addition, the parish recently introduced a mobile app that includes a wealth of information relevant to Formation. To download the app, search for SJ23 in the app store or Google play store.



If you have given us your cell phone number, we will be setting up groups in Remind, a text messaging service. You should receive an invitation once we set up the groups. If you want to receive periodic reminders and messages regarding inclement weather etc., please accept the invitation. (We limit how many messages we send and you can “stop” the messages at any time.) In addition, we may be asking some of the high school students for their cell phone numbers so we can send periodic reminders, especially as it pertains to what was talked about during the sessions (prayer reminders etc.) We will ask for their cell phone numbers on the first night of class.

If you do not receive an invitation by mid-October, contact the Formation office if you would like to be included in the text group.

### **Faith Formation Commission**

This commission promotes and develops opportunities for lifelong faith formation aimed at personal conversion and growth in faith. The members collaborate with the pastor and staff in this area of mission on programs of evangelization and catechesis.

The Faith Formation Commission currently meets every other month. If you are interested in being part of this important commission of the parish, please contact Maureen.

### **Parent Involvement**

We recognize that it is the parent who is the primary religious educator of their child(ren). We strive to support parents in any way we can in this endeavor. The best way to educate your children is by example; by attending Liturgy on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation; by adhering to Church teachings and by modeling Christian values in your everyday lives.

We also need parent and parish volunteers in order to make this program a success. We are always in need of catechists, substitute catechists, room parents, and hall monitors. Catechists need not have experience, just a willingness to pass on their faith. They may be parents, grandparents, siblings, and interested parishioners, anyone who wants to share their faith. We will train catechists. Catechists also receive a stipend based on their background and experience. Substitute catechists will receive a break on their fees or a stipend for their time.

We also periodically need parent/parish volunteers to help out on retreats, chaperone activities and other events as they arise. For more information or to volunteer, contact the Formation Office or check the web site.

### **Adult Baptism and/or Confirmation**

As your children prepare for First Communion and Confirmation, you may be feeling the call to find out more about how YOU (or someone you care about) can complete your Catholic Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation). If you would like more information about receiving any of these sacraments, contact Maureen at 262-284-2102 or [rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org](mailto:rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org)

## CRE School Year Calendars 2023-24

**Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade CRE** meets the first three Mondays of the month (unless otherwise indicated.) Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade meet from 6:00-7:00pm; 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade meet from 6:00-7:30pm. Each session starts in the Church for a short prayer service.

### Parent meeting for grades K-10 on September 11 at 6:00pm

Date	Grade level		January 8, 2024	CRE K-8
September 18, 2023	CRE K-8		January 15, 2024	CRE K-8
October 2, 2023	CRE K-8		February 5, 2024	CRE K-8
October 9, 2023	CRE K-8		February 12, 2024	CRE K-8
October 16, 2023	CRE K-8		February 18 or 19, 2024	LIFT (choose one)
November 6, 2023	CRE K-8		March 4, 2024	CRE K-8
November 13, 2023	CRE K-8		March 11, 2024	CRE K-8
November 20, 2023	CRE K-8		March 18, 2024	CRE K-8
December 4, 2023	CRE K-8		April 1, 2024	CRE K-8
December 11, 2023	CRE K-8		April 8, 2024	CRE K-8
December 18, 2023	CRE K-8		April 15, 2024	CRE K-8

\*Family Faith Enrichment sessions are on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month; each K-8 family is asked to participate in at least one session. See separate handout for details or [www.stjohn23rd.org](http://www.stjohn23rd.org)

**9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grade CRE** meets every other week from 6:00-7:30pm. We will begin most sessions in Room 141/142

September 18, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
October 2, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
October 16, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
October 30, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
November 13, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
November 27, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
December 11, 2023	CRE 9th/10th
January 8, 2024	CRE 9th/10th
January 22, 2024	CRE 9th/10th
February 5, 2024	CRE 9th/10th
February 18 or 19, 2024	LIFT
March 4, 2024	CRE 9th/10th
March 18, 2024	CRE 9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup>
April 1, 2024	CRE 9th/10th
April 15, 2024	CRE 9th/10th

**2023/24 Retreat dates**

September 30, 2023: *John Bosco Youth Day* at Holy Hill

March 16, 2024: *Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally* at Carroll University

April 20, 2024: *Living the Eucharist Day of Reflection* at St. John XXIII

More dates may be added. Check [www.stjohn23rd.org](http://www.stjohn23rd.org) for updates and to register. Above retreats are open to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

## ***Prayer for the Eucharistic Revival***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to stay with us always, until the end of the age.

Reawaken our wonder at His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist.  
May our hearts burn within us as He opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread.

Give us the eyes of faith to recognize His presence in our brothers and sisters, especially in the face of the poor and the suffering.

Nourished by the Eucharist, send us forth to walk faithfully as missionary disciples, proclaiming the Gospel to every heart and extending Your kingdom to every land.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

***Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles***

### **Mass Times at St. John XXIII**

Saturday at 4:30pm at St. Peter's

Sunday at 8:30am at Immaculate Conception

Sunday at 10:30am at St. Mary's

Sunday at 5:00pm at St. Peter's

Children's Liturgy of the Word during the 5:00pm Mass on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays

Check website/bulletin for Mass times for Holy Days of Obligation