



St. John XXIII

Catholic Parish & School

2024-2025

*CRE Family*

*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 lifelong 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.

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all CRE sessions is required. We recognize that young people have a lot of opportunities and worldly pressures, but we believe that the support they receive from the Religious Education program 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.

### **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, and fourth 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 and fourth 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 6 or 8.

Fifth through eighth grade will be using the *Catholic Connections Handbook*, also from St. Mary's Press. In addition, sixth grade will learn about Salvation History via a video series: *Encounter: The Bible Timeline for Middle School*. Seventh grade will look at the life and mission of Christ integrated with clips from the series *The Chosen*. Eighth grade will integrate the sacraments and the New Testament with the video series: *Envision, Theology of the Body for Middle School*. These sessions are based on life issues that middle school students face and how to approach them through the lens of faith. This year, both fifth and sixth grade students will receive the *Catholic Youth Bible* which is theirs to keep and will continue to be used throughout High School. Seventh and eighth grade students should bring the Bible they received in sixth grade 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 different programs to help them grow as mature disciples of Christ. Ninth graders will engage in *Live It*, which is from the same publisher as the elementary program and their *Catholic Youth Bible*. The curriculum encompasses scripture, prayer and various activities to demonstrate how we apply the concepts of our faith to real life and make it meaningful. They will also integrate a brand new session from *YDisciple* which helps them look at ways to be the person God created and called them to be. Tenth graders will be introduced to [formed.org](http://formed.org) and the video series, *The Search Begins*, which will answer questions they may have about the Catholic faith while showing them the incredible beauty of our faith. It is designed to help them encounter and grow in their relationship with God. Tenth graders will participate in a *YDisciple* scripture study that dives deeper into the Creed, particularly the four marks of the church and helps them develop a new sense of what the Church was created to be: a sanctuary, a place of beauty and refuge. Our hope is the 9th and 10th grade program will call them to say "yes" to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in eleventh grade.

### **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. On special occasions, all grades may pray together as an entire community.

## **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 4th grade student will be given a prayer sheet. Please review the prayers on the sheet with your child/ren each night, initial the designated bottom area of the sheet, and return them each Monday to their catechists (teachers). Each time your child turns in their prayer sheet, their name will be entered 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/38/public>

## **High School Community Builder (new)**

Our church is built on community and socialization. Therefore, our classes will begin after a short period of community builders (games) and social activities that help transition them to class. Why food and socialization? Jesus broke the bread...He fed them and socialized with the disciples and followers before engaging them in His teachings. We would like each student to contribute a snack for the beginning of class. A sign up sheet will be made available for the kids to sign up and later online for parents to view as well. We have about 50 kids so if we get four sign ups that is roughly two dozen snacks. Contributing to a snack item is much appreciated!

## **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 someone is late, they will need to enter through Door 10 on the west side of the building.

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 the case of an emergency**, parents should call the Formation office.

## **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 may be called. On the second offense, the parents will be called, but this time a request will be made to pick up their child. On the third offense, the student will need to be homeschooled for the remainder 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. Students who consistently do not participate may be asked to meet with the Formation Director along with the students' parents.

### **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 website 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 a class were to be canceled.

### **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).

### **Parish Mission**

This year we are offering special formation opportunities to all members of our parish, regardless of age or family status, through our Parish Mission: Church Fully Alive! The Faith Formation team along with St. John XXIII school is collaborating to present sessions lead by dynamic speaker Joe Farris on how ALL are called to be the Church and our role in making the Church fully alive! 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 role in our Church community. The same session will be offered three different times, but the Monday time is focused on families with school aged children.

**Please note that all sessions will be at St. Peter.**

*CRE/Confirmation students and families are required to attend **ONE** of these sessions instead of CRE that week:*

- Sunday, February 16, 2025
- Monday, February 17, 2025 (Specifically focused on families with school aged children.)
- Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Registration for the sessions will be available on the parish website by early December.

### **Family Faith Enrichment Sessions (FFE)**

Parents are recognized by the Church to be the primary religious educators of their children. During the school year we will be holding Family Enrichment Sessions on the fourth Monday of each month from 6:00-7:00 pm in Room 141/142. These will help build relationships and share knowledge with your children and other families in the faith community. Families that participate in our CRE program with a child in grades K-5, are asked to attend at least one of these sessions during the 2024-25 academic year *in addition* to one of the Parish mission sessions in February. Only one is required by each student, but you are more than welcome to attend more than one. You may register online here: [qr.link/164T0q](https://qr.link/164T0q) (or scan the QR code.)



September 23 – “Creation and Community”

October 28 – “Saints and Service”



November 25 – “Unwrapping the Gift”  
January 27 – “Hands to Serve, Hearts to Love”  
February 16, 17\* and 18 - “Parish Mission: Church Fully Alive!”  
March 24 – “Journey to Calvary”  
April 28 – “We Have a Mission”

For a more detailed description of each session, look in the parent folder or go to <https://stjohn23rd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/family-enrichment-sessions-24.25.pdf>

### **Retreats**

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) and 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. Middle school students who attend at least two “Youth Group” (see below) sessions also satisfy the requirement for the year.

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. ( <https://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.

#### **2024/25 Retreat dates**

September 28, 2024. *John Bosco Youth Day* at Holy Hill – (Middle and High school)

March 15, 2025. *Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally* at Carroll University (middle and high school)

April 12, 2025. *Alive in Mission!* Day of reflection at St. John XXIII - St. Peter (middle & 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, usher etc. or are interested in becoming involved, contact the Formation office for more information.

### **Communication/Text Messages**

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 Formation website <https://stjohn23rd.org/> often for updates, registrations and other information and “Like” our St. John XXIII Facebook page. 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 prefer to receive communications via text message, please complete the “Update CRE Contact Information” form at the parent meeting or by going to

<https://stjohn23rd.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/216/responses/new>

(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.

### **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 approximately 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.

**Online Family Faith Formation**

In recognition that formation does not just happen on Mondays but that sometimes families need more tools to help in this area, we have purchased a subscription to Formed.org for all of our parishioners. Formed is an online platform with movies, limited series, programs and more for all ages. To access the platform, go to formed.org, log in as an individual, look for our parish or zip code (53074) and enjoy the content!

**CRE School Year Calendars 2024-2025**

**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 6:00-7:00 pm; 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade meet from 6:00-7:30 pm. Each session starts in the Church for a short prayer service.

**Parent meeting for grades K-10 on September 9 at 6:00pm**

Date	Grade level		January 6, 2025	CRE K-8
September 16, 2024	CRE K-8		January 13, 2025	CRE K-8
October 7, 2024	CRE K-8		January 20, 2025	CRE K-8
October 14, 2024	CRE K-8		February 3, 2025	CRE K-8
October 21, 2024	CRE K-8		February 10, 2025	CRE K-8
			February 16, 17 or 18	Parish mission – ALL Grades
November 4, 2024	CRE K-8		March 3, 2025	CRE K-8
November 11, 2024	CRE K-8		March 10, 2025	CRE K-8
November 18, 2024	CRE K-8		March 17, 2025	CRE K-8
December 2, 2024	CRE K-8		April 7, 2025	CRE K-8
December 9, 2024	CRE K-8		April 14, 2025	CRE K-8
December 16, 2024	CRE K-8		April 21, 2025	CRE K-8

\*Family Faith Enrichment sessions are on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month; each K-5 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 (NEW!)** meets every **First and Third Monday** from 6:00-7:30 pm. We will begin each session in Room 141 with the exception of a few nights in the church. **NEW THIS YEAR:** With fewer class sessions, in lieu of class and as a service component to our youth ministry: 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> graders are **required to attend one 4<sup>th</sup> Monday** of the month to assist with the Youth Group. A sign up will be available soon!

September 16, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		January 20, 2025	CRE 9th/10th
October 7, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		February 3, 2025	CRE 9th/10th
October 21, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		February 16, 17 or 18, 2025	Parish mission
November 4, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		March 3, 2025	CRE 9th/10th
November 18, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		March 17, 2025	CRE 9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup>
December 2, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		April 7, 2025	CRE 9th/10th
December 16, 2024	CRE 9th/10th		April 21, 2025	CRE 9th/10th
January 6, 2025	CRE 9th/10th			

**Youth Opportunities:**

**Youth Bible Study NEW:**

Bible Studies will be offered in 2025! Flyers will be sent out with dates and location and time. Bible Studies will be offered at the middle and high school levels. They will be made available in 2025.

**SJ XXIII Teen Service Group Coming Soon! Ages 6th grade and up: Living the mission: joyfully serving our community!**

Teens will be surveyed about interest in forming this group. This group would meet and select some local service opportunities, while learning about the Church’s teaching on the Works of Mercy and putting the teaching into action. Parents who would like to volunteer and join this group, please contact **Lesa Staehler** . A survey and sign up will be going out soon! A date for the first meeting is forthcoming pending the survey.

**Youth Group NEW!!**

Beginning on October 28, 2024, SJ23rd youth group will be offered for all 6-10th graders to participate in. 9th and 10th are invited to attend as positive role models and help in leading prayers,activities (games!), etc. This is open to all 6th-8th graders in the parish and they are welcome to invite a friend.