



St. John XXIII
Catholic Parish & School

2025-2026

CRE Family

Handbook



Faith Formation Office
1800 N Wisconsin
Port Washington, WI 53074

Phone: 262-284-2102
Web site: www.stjohn23rd.org



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

Faith Formation Office Staff

Director of Formation: Maureen Rotramel rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org

Associate Director (K-8): Dawn Goodno goodnod@stjohn23rd.org

Associate Director HS/Youth Ministry: Lesa Staehler staehlerl@stjohn23rd.org

Assistant: Carrie Ehrlich (ehrliehc@stjohn23rd.org)

Assistant: Barb Lettiere (lettiereb@stjohn23rd.org)

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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.

Calendars

2025-2026 CRE School Year

**Parent meetings for grades K-10 on September 8: 6:00pm for grades K-8
6:30 for grades 9-10**

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

Date	Grade level		January 5, 2026	CRE K-6
September 15, 2025	CRE K-6		January 12, 2026	CRE K-6
October 6, 2025	CRE K-6		January 19, 2026	CRE K-6
October 13, 2025	CRE K-6		February 2, 2026	CRE K-6
October 20, 2025	CRE K-6		February 9, 2026	CRE K-6
			February 15 OR 16	LIFT – ALL Grades
November 3, 2025	CRE K-6		March 2, 2026	CRE K-6
November 10, 2025	CRE K-6		March 9, 2026	CRE K-6
November 17, 2025	CRE K-6		March 16, 2026	CRE K-6
December 1, 2025	CRE K-6		April 6, 2026	CRE K-6
December 8, 2025	CRE K-6		April 13, 2026	CRE K-6
December 15, 2025	CRE K-6		April 20, 2026	CRE K-6

*Family Faith Enrichment sessions are on the 4th 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

7th -10th grade CRE* (NEW!) meets every **First and Third Monday** from 6:00-7:30 pm. With the exception of the first night meeting in room 141, all other sessions will begin in your small group designated areas for 9th and 10th grade. (7th & 8th will start in the Church).

September 15, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		January 19, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
October 6, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		February 2, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
October 20, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		February 15 or 16, 2026	LIFT
November 3, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		March 2, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
November 17, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		March 16, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
December 1, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		April 6, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
December 15, 2025	CRE 7th - 10th		April 20, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th
January 5, 2026	CRE 7th - 10th			

***Additional outside class requirements will be expected in order to fulfill the Archdiocesan minimal expectation of classroom hours. In order to meet this requirement:**

7/8th graders have the following options:

- Participating in a minimum of 2 youth nights and attending 1 Retreat
- Participating in a summer mission trip
- Other experiences approved by director or youth minister that yields at minimum 6 class hours

9/10th graders have the following options:

- Participating in one retreat and being a youth leader at youth group one night
- Attending a summer mission trip
- Attending a Youth Conference (Steubenville, NCYC)
- Attending at least 2 Adult Formation Speakers and being a leader at youth group night
- Other experiences approved by director or youth minister that yields at minimum 6 class hours
- Attending the *Men of Christ* or *Women of Christ* Conferences with a parent & writing a reflection

Cell Phone Use During CRE Classes

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. If this is a class issue, catechists will collect all cell phones in a container at the beginning of class and return them at the end.

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 gave us your cell phone number and carrier, we may send text message reminders on a limited basis (in case of class cancellations or special reminders). 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.

(New) Youth Ministry will be using the GroupMe app for communication and reminders about events, etc. More information about the app will be given out during classes and youth groups.

Community Builder for High School

Our church is built on community and socialization. Our classes will end with a short period of community builders (games) and social activities. A snack will be provided during the activity. We encourage families to consider contributing to the snacks as we are a community. Contributing to a snack item is much appreciated and the youth enjoy it!

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 through 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 5 or 7.

Middle School: The sixth grade will learn about the Old Testament and Salvation History. They will be using a video series: *Encounter: The Bible Timeline for Middle School*, along with O.T. Skits and lessons from the *Catholic Connections Handbook*, also from St. Mary’s Press. The Seventh grade will focus on the New Testament & Discipleship. They will look at the life and mission of Christ integrated with clips from the series *The Chosen*. The 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. Sixth grade students will receive the *Catholic Youth Bible* that will remain in the classroom and will continue to be used throughout High School.

High School: Ninth and tenth grade will utilize different programs to help them grow as mature disciples of Christ. The ninth grade curriculum is “The Road to Friendship with Christ: Every step brings us closer to His heart.” The curriculum encompasses scripture, growing a relationship with Jesus, prayer and various activities to demonstrate how we apply the concepts of our faith to real life and make it meaningful. Lessons will derive and be integrated from *Live It*, their *Catholic Youth Bible*, *EQ Saints*, *Quick Catholic Lessons with Fr. Mike*, Formed.org, and *Y-Disciple*. The Tenth grade curriculum is “Restless Hearts: Searching for God in a world full of distractions.” The curriculum will introduce youth to 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 deeper with God. The 9th and 10th curriculum will be integrated with other experiences, such as adoration, mini retreats, service projects, etc. to engage youth in our faith. Our hope is the 9th and 10th grade program will call them to say “yes” to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in eleventh grade.

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.

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 October, November, January, March 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 2025-26 academic year *in addition to* one of the LIFT 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:

<https://stjohn23rd.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/290/responses/new> (or scan the QR code.)

October 27 – “The Saints and Us: Friends Forever”

November 24 – “Jesus is Coming”

January 26 – “God Loves Us”

March 23 - “What’s So Holy about Holy Week?”



For a more detailed description of each session, look in the parent folder or go to <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ITufTEFvfK7XI6cAlBjcYx6gshBDQoQA/view?usp=sharing>

Inclement Weather

In case of bad weather, please check the website at 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.

LIFT

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 (formerly Growing the Cluster) Sessions. The Faith Formation team along with St. John XXIII school are collaborating to present "Learning in Faith Together" 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 a parish. The same session will be offered two different times.

Please note that all sessions will be at St. Peter in the cafeteria.

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 Faith Formation Office by February 10 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://stjohn23rd.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/292/responses/new> or by scanning the QR code.

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

- Sunday, February 15, 2026
- Monday, February 16, 2025



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

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.

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!

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.

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. 9th and 10th grade students will pray either together in rooms 141/142 or in their rooms with their small 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.

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. Middle school (7 & 8) and high school (9 & 10) students are encouraged to attend at least one retreat/reflection *each year*. Students will also have the option of attending Archdiocesan and district events to fulfill this requirement and/or participate in the Ministry Apprenticeship.

Retreat dates for 2025/26

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/>).

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.



2025-26 Youth Retreat Offerings							
Sunday	November	9	11:30 AM - 3:00 PM	Our Lady of the Lakes, Random Lake	Youth Retreat	7th - 10th	Franki Moscato: American singer/songwriter, actress, and national speaker.
Saturday	December	6	1:00 PM - 5:30 PM	St. John XXIII St Peter's Site	Youth Retreat	6th - 12th parents are welcome to join us for 4:30 PM Mass	Advent: Preparing Our Hearts for Jesus
Wednesday	January	28	6:30 PM - 7:45 PM	Our Lady of the Lakes, Random Lake	Speaker	7th -10th parent must also attend	Understanding Exorcism with Archbishop Grob
Wednesday	February	25	6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Our Lady of the Lakes, Random Lake	Youth Retreat	7th - 10th	Set Free: A Lenten Journey of Forgiveness
Saturday	April	18	11:00 AM - 5:30 PM	St. John XXIII St Peter's Site	Youth Retreat	6th - 12th parents are welcome to join us for 4:30 PM Mass	Overflow - Overflowing with hope, powered by the Spirit.

Divine Savior/Our Lady of the Lakes have generously offered to collaborate on retreats. Parents will need to provide transportation to all retreats and a small fee may apply. If other opportunities arise, we will notify you. We will have more information on these retreats that will be shared closer to the dates of the events! We hope you can join us!

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.

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.

Tardiness/Early Release/Absence Communications

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.**

Elementary and Middle School: 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.

High School: If a student needs to leave early or is arriving late, parents should email or text prior to class. High school students should always use Door 10 for their entrance and can ring the bell if they are unable to get into the building.

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

Youth Opportunities:

Youth Bible Study:

Bible Studies will be offered. Flyers will be sent out with information. Bible Studies will be offered at the middle and high school levels.

SJ XXIII Teen Service Opportunities! Ages 6th grade and up: Living the mission: joyfully serving our community!

Do you love serving others? Looking for ways to be involved? Opportunities may arise for teens to participate in outreach activities within our local community or Ozaukee

County. Parents who would like to volunteer and lead an outreach activity, please contact [Lesa Staehler](#). Information will be posted on our website, youth ministry app and flyers will be distributed when opportunities are available.

Youth Group: Unleashed: Living Boldly for Christ

Youth Group will kick off on September 22, 2025. 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 school. They are welcome to invite a friend. A flyer with details and sign up will be distributed, posted in bulletin, GroupMe app (new) and social media.

6th-8th grade CRE students are encouraged to attend at least two Youth Group nights - but of course, we hope you come to more!