

Sacred Heart of Jesus
Catholic Church
Catholic Youth Formation Handbook



2025 - 26

Greetings CYF Families:

Welcome to the 2025-26 CYF school year at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. We look forward to working closely with you to help provide a Christ-filled school year for all the CYF students of the parish. Please know that as parents, you are invaluable to this program. We recognize that you are the first model of God's love for your children and that no one knows them better or loves them more than you do. It is our goal, then, to work with you and to support the faith formation of your child.

The spirit of this ongoing program is to empower our children to live out their baptismal call and give witness to the Gospel by fostering their love of Jesus Christ and his Church. Our program is designed to assist parents by offering weekly instruction to children in Kindergarten through eighth grade. We strive to nurture each child and each family in the knowledge and love of God in order to enrich their faith life and to enable them to live out their call to stewardship in the community.

As we all recommit ourselves to living as disciples of Jesus Christ, we all must recognize that, in addition to our financial support, our time and talent are also necessary to the success of the CYF program. We will ask for your support in these ways throughout the year.

Pray for us as we will be praying for you,

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Mission Statement

The mission of our Catholic Youth Formation Program is to integrate knowledge of our Catholic faith with liturgical living, moral formation,

prayer, community life and a missionary spirit to form young disciples in our parish.

Our Program

The spirit of this ongoing program is to empower the children of our parish to live out their baptismal call and give witness to the Gospel by fostering their love of Jesus Christ and his Church. Our program is designed to assist parents by offering weekly instruction to children in Kindergarten through eighth grade. We strive to nurture each child and each family in the knowledge and love of God in order to enrich their faith life and to enable them to live out their call to stewardship in the community.

It is our desire for every student in Catholic Youth Formation to:

- Center his or her life around the Lord's Day, celebrating the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ through weekly participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass, which without we could not be.
- Develop a dynamic relationship with God through prayer, bringing about a deeper understanding of who God is and how God acts for our salvation.
- Become a resourceful seeker of the truths of our faith by knowing how to utilize Holy Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- Live a virtuous lifestyle in service of God and others.

The many curriculums, activities, and experiences within our program help our children develop these essential components of the Christian life.

Discipleship at Sacred Heart

Frequently in His parables, Jesus spoke of servants or stewards being entrusted with some good, be it money or life itself, and then being accountable for the way in which they invested that which they had been given. Surprisingly, Jesus characterized this investment of one's self and resources not simply as fulfilling an obligation, but as the path towards joy and meaning. *Come, share your master's joy* was the reward given to the servants who invested their talents well.

God gives us life, speaks to us and entrusts us with gifts, even the gift of His Son. The disciple's life then takes the shape of expending all one has been given in order to be judged a Christian at life's end, and welcomed into the master's joy.

To this end, we endeavor to inspire one another to an authentic life of faith and to help keep one another accountable through a constant renewal of discipleship in following the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each year we ask our CYF families to recommit themselves to a deeper following of the Lord by completing a Discipleship Renewal Form. This form is designed to put the initiatives of one's soul and the movements of the Holy Spirit down on paper for the family's and the parish's benefit, serving as a reminder of the great gifts God has given us and our actions of thanksgiving, which one gives back to God.

A Discipleship Renewal Form is a visible sign for your family that you are willing to provide for the needs of the Gospel. This yearly renewal allows a family to receive from the community that which the individual family could not possibly obtain on its own: faith formation in our CYF program, sacraments for our children, and even future weddings in our church.

The Discipleship Renewal Form provides the parish with your most up-to-date contact information. In addition, your family will set a Tithing goal to help provide for the needs of the Gospel. As a disciple, you understand that you have been blessed by God with everything from life to livelihood. All the ministries at Sacred Heart of Jesus are provided for by parishioners. The parish asks that you give a good-faith pledge according to your heart and your means.

We are all asked to remain committed to keeping the Lord's day holy through Mass attendance. As well, your family will commit to attending to your spiritual lives by creating goals and working toward them.

Finally, you will be asked to record the ways your family and its members are being called to help minister to the parish community. There are three sections we ask you to review, and record where God is calling you to participate. The lists are not exhaustive, and are open to God's own creativity in your family's life. The three sections are: Liturgical Life, Common Life, and Spiritual Life. In Liturgical Life, you record how you would like to be involved in the Mass-- if your children want to be an altar server or if you would like to be in the choir, etc. In the Common Life, you can record ways that you can become involved in the various ministries of our parish community such as providing food for funeral dinners, volunteering for our food pantry, helping the garden club pull weeds on our campus, joining in the Altar Society or Knights of Columbus, etc. In Spiritual Life, you and your family record ways that you will grow spiritually this year. These spiritual goals are for you to set and keep track of during the year, helping you grow closer to Christ.

All families wishing to enroll their children in CYF must have at least one parent/guardian attend Father Carter's Discipleship Presentation.

Religious Education Policy

Class times

Our CYF classes for Kindergarten through 8th grade are held on Sunday mornings from 11:15 -12 :15.

CYF Fees

Our CYF registration fee covers the cost of materials and activities in class and the cost of using the facilities during the school year. Retreat fees cover a small portion of the cost of special activities. Fees increase after registration closes each Fall. No child will be denied religious education due to financial constraints.

Program Communication

Families who are registered for CYF are added to the group communications. Email and Text Message communications will be our main method of communication for CYF related messages. Please check your email routinely for information regarding CYF. We will try to send a text message to alert you to check email when a time sensitive email has been sent out.

Student Expectations/Participation

The time a student spends in the CYF classroom is miniscule when you add up the hours he or she spends at school, with family, and participating in other activities during the week. With this in mind, we ask that students come to class prepared, on-time, and ready to learn. Please be sure your child has had meals and uses the restroom before class. Also, please remember CYF does not replace Mass attendance for a child.

Weekly attendance is expected. In the event that a student is sick, please notify Joan before class time. Students in our sacrament preparation programs are expected to make up content and assignments missed during absences. During the year of sacrament preparation, and during the year immediately prior, a satisfactory level of attendance in CYF must be accomplished.

Students will be issued a textbook and a folder. Students are asked to bring these to class each week. Reading assignments are listed in the folder, and the student is responsible for reading the chapter(s) or completing assignments before class each week. Parents are encouraged to read the chapters with their children to ensure understanding. Parents of younger children will initial the folder each week. Textbooks are the property of CYF and should be returned in good condition at the end of the year.

Mass Attendance & Giving Envelopes

Seeking to develop a sense of gratitude and a recognition that all fruits come from above, we center our lives around the Eucharist and place Mass attendance at the center of our week. It is expected that all CYF families and Catechists keep holy the Lord's day by attending Mass every Sunday (Saturday Vigil.) In this way of life, we also seek to give back to God, from whom all good things come.

All Children in Kindergarten through 6th Grade will receive a set of weekly envelopes. Returning these weekly provides an opportunity for our children to develop the virtues of responsibility and gratitude. Students will place envelopes in the collection at Mass or in the drop slot by the church office front door if they forget during Mass. Children can place a monetary offering in the envelopes from their own allowance **or write a prayer for a loved one, or even draw a picture of something God has provided for them that week as their offering.**

Code of Conduct

Inappropriate and disrespectful behavior towards catechists or other classmates will not be tolerated. This behavior includes the wearing of offensive, suggestive, or distracting apparel as well as offensive and disrespectful language. If a child is disruptive, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Catechists will first attempt to correct the behavior in the classroom.
2. If poor behavior continues, the child will be sent to the CYF office to call home to inform parents and guardians of the behavior in class.
3. If a student continues to be disruptive, the student may be asked to continue his/her religious education at home until such a time as catechists, parents, and directors feel the student is able to return to the class and maintain proper behavior.

Inclement Weather

Your family's safety is always a top priority. In the case of inclement weather, the CYF staff will make a decision in advance to cancel CYF classes or postpone activities.

You will be notified by text message by 7:15 a.m. on Sundays regarding the status. CYF will also broadcast cancellations on KVOE Radio and WIBW Channel 13.

The make up date for a missed Sunday is the second Sunday of Spring Break.

Parking & Traffic & Arrival

Class time is very busy at the parish. For the safety of your family and others, please observe all posted signs and parking laws when arriving and picking up your child. No family should park in the street between Sacred Heart School and the Parish Hall. The playground is not monitored by CYF personnel before or after class.

Building Entry

Most classes meet in the Sacred Heart School building.

Sunday

Students are asked to arrive no more than 10 minutes before class. Students will remain outside the school until their catechist is in the building. In the case of inclement weather, students will be allowed into the building to sit in the gym where there is space to wait. There will be a door monitor at the south entrance of the school each week to direct and monitor students.

Confirmation Year 2 students will meet in the parish office.

Dismissal

Students K-5th grade will remain on the sidewalk in front of the school while parents come to meet them. Children will not be sent into the parking lot. Students 6th grade and above will be allowed to carefully navigate parked cars to locate parents. Catechists will assure that all students have a ride home or help make phone calls if a ride is late.

Parent/Guardian Visits

If a student is being picked up early, parents are to report to the south door of the school to have the door keeper locate the student.

Protecting God's Children - VIRTUS

All employees whether working around children or not; and all volunteers who have contact with children and/or youth are required to submit to background checks prior to their engagement with children or teens. All volunteers whose roles put them in contact with children and/or youth, all employees, and all clergy are required to attend a child safety awareness program designed for adults called Virtus®. Volunteers between the ages of 16 - 18 who participate in environments and activities that may include younger children will also be required to attend a Virtus® awareness session. Children under the age of 16 should never attend the Awareness sessions (nor should they be considered as adults or placed in unsupervised environments requiring adult supervision of minors). For those volunteers under the age of 18, a Parental Permission Form is required for admittance and we encourage that a Parent/Guardian attend the same Virtus Awareness session with their child.

All children under the age of 18 enrolled in Catholic Schools or in Religious Formation Programs or parish youth groups participate in age-appropriate awareness training designed for children to help protect them. Parents who choose to "opt out" of these children's programs on behalf of their children may obtain the training materials from their parish or school so they themselves can provide awareness training for their own children.

Sacramental Policies and Preparation

"The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.

That is why they are called 'sacraments of faith.'"44

Paragraph 1123, Catechism of the Catholic Church

The sacramental preparation process at Sacred Heart of Jesus helps your child and your family encounter God through the beauty found in the mysteries of the Church. The sacrament preparation process is a two year process designed to increase understanding of our faith and develop a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

Students preparing for sacraments are expected to take part in religious education from Kindergarten to 12th grade. It is required that all candidates attend a form of religious education for two years prior to the reception of First Confession, First Communion, and/or Confirmation. This catechetical instruction may be done in a full time Catholic school, like Sacred Heart School, a Catholic Youth Formation program, like Sacred Heart's CYF program, or an approved homeschool program.

Faithful weekend Mass attendance is a prerequisite before preparing to receive a sacrament. The sacraments flow from the paschal mystery we celebrate at each Mass and cannot be separated from this celebration. **Students in Year 1 and Year 2 of Confirmation classes and students in Pre-Communion and Communion class are asked to sign in at Mass each week to assure that this prerequisite is being met.**

If coming in 2nd-8th grade without a previous year of faith formation, a child will complete one year of faith formation and will continue into the following year where he/she will attend additional sacramental preparation courses.

Ordinarily the child will receive the sacrament in the spring of the second year of preparation, with consistent attendance in CYF classes and Sunday Mass. This is the general timeline, but preparedness will be under the discretion of the Pastor and CYF Director.

A copy of your child's baptismal certificate is required before your child receives new sacraments at Sacred Heart.

What if my child has not been baptized?

Once a child reaches the age of reason, he or she is able to choose between right and wrong and belief or unbelief. It is no longer sufficient for just the parents or guardians to wish for their child to be baptized.

At Sacred Heart, a child who has not been baptized and has reached the age of reason begins a one year preparation process that involves catechesis and spiritual growth.

The year of preparation will consist of:

1. Faithful Mass attendance on Sundays (Saturday Vigils).
2. Have at least one parent or guardian with an ongoing commitment to developing the child in the Catholic Faith.
3. Participate in one year of Catholic Youth Formation, with consistent class attendance and participation.
 - a. Throughout the year there will be additional classes to prepare your child for baptism.
 - b. Ordinarily the baptism will occur at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

What if my child has not received First Reconciliation & First Communion?

1. Attend Sunday (Saturday Vigil Mass) faithfully each week.
2. Have at least one parent, guardian, and/or godparent with an ongoing commitment to developing the child in the Catholic faith.
3. Participate in two years of Catholic Youth Formation with consistent class attendance and participation.

Preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation

The preparation process to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation involves a two year cycle of catechesis and spiritual growth. The prescribed timeline begins in 7th grade and is completed in 8th grade. Individuals in older grades or ages will ordinarily be prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation through the RCIA program at Sacred Heart.

Attending religious education in the 7th grade without prior classes will count towards the two year requirement of faith formation. The ordinary timeline to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation is to complete two years of the Confirmation program and be confirmed in the spring of the second year.

In accord with our sacramental preparation programs, a student will need to:

1. Attend Sunday (Saturday Vigil) Mass faithfully each week.
2. Have at least one parent, guardian, and/or godparent with an ongoing commitment to developing the child in the Catholic Faith.
3. Attend Sacred Heart's two year Confirmation program faithfully, attending class consistently and completing all program requirements.

CYF Scope & Sequence

- **Kindergarten**
 - Founded on 2 unifying truths: God and creation; stresses the dignity of each child created in God's image
- **1st Grade**
 - An invitation to know, love, and trust God and his love story
- **2nd Grade**
 - Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion
- **3rd Grade**
 - A special emphasis on God's love and mercy in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist
- **4th Grade**
 - Salvation history points students towards Jesus Christ who fulfills Old Testaments promises
- **5th Grade**
 - A study of the Creed; students come to understand that they must stand firm in their faith
- **6th Grade**
 - Morality: The Ten Commandments and Beatitudes; The Holy Mass
- **Year I & Year II Confirmation**
 - The Church's responsibility in Salvation History: a study of the seven sacraments as channels of God's grace; the call to holiness through virtue, purity, works of mercy, vocation, and social justice.

Prayer Program

“Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer.

Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him
"to whom we speak;"

Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2704

Learning vocal prayers by memorization is essential to the growth of the life of faith. As we form our children in our Catholic faith, we must teach them the prayers of our tradition to help them learn how to pray when we come together to worship. In class, as we build a relationship with God, the prayers that our children will learn become springboards for adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication.

The format of our prayer program to help students learn the prayers of our faith as they move through CYF. These prayers should be practiced and tested at home. Once your child memorizes a prayer, you may sign off on the Prayer List sheet that can be found in his or her CYF folder. Students will be expected to know their prayers by the end of the CYF year. Below are the cumulative prayers to know for each grade.

Grade/Class	Prayers to Know
K	Sign of the Cross, Glory Be, Angel of God, Before Meal Prayer
1st (pre-Communion)	Hail Mary, Our Father
2nd (Communion)	Act of Contrition, Morning Offering
3rd	Fatima Prayer, The Sacraments
4th	10 Commandments, Prayer After Meals
5th	Apostles' Creed, St. Michael's Prayer
6th	Mysteries of the Rosary, Hail Holy Queen
Confirmation Year I	Angelus, Divine Mercy Chaplet, 4 Marks of the Church
Confirmation Year II	Memorare, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Saint Shrines

Each class has a Saint shrine to help foster our relationship with the Communion of Saints. The shrine will remain in the class prayer space or in a visible location during class each week. We have additional resources- reading material, coloring pages, prayer cards- that will be available to help students and families learn about the saint. The purpose of the shrine is to introduce the Saints of each grade's curriculum to the CYF students. The Saint shrines for each grade are as listed:

Grade	Saints
Kindergarten	Mary, Mother of God
Pre-Communion	St. Francis of Assisi
Communion	St. Clare of Assisi
3rd Grade	St. Dominic Savio
4th Grade	St. Kateri Tekakwitha
5th Grade	St. John Vianney
6th Grade	St. Martin De Porres, St. Teresa of Calcutta
Year I Confirmation	St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Maria Goretti
Year II Confirmation	St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Benedict

Family Faith Formation

We ask that every family in the CYF program commit to a deep life of prayer and faith formation. All of the classes and activities are designed to facilitate one thing...a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Both children and parents/guardians must come away with the Lord to a quiet place to deepen this relationship established at baptism.

We understand and realize that your family schedule has many commitments, so we endeavor to provide numerous opportunities at the parish to fit your schedule to help you grow in your relationship with Christ and his Church. Below are some ideas of ways you can invest in your personal and family's Faith Formation:

- Eucharistic Adoration as a family

- Attending Stations of the Cross During Lent
- Attending a Weekday Mass as a family
- Attend Protecting God's Children: Virtus Class for Adults
- Praying a Weekly Rosary as a family
- Attending Divine Mercy Sunday Holy Hour
- Attending Adult Education Opportunities
- Preparing your family for Mass by reading the weekend's readings together

Faith Formation Resources for your Family

- [Teaching Catholic Kids](#)
- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishop](#) (USCCB)
- <https://www.usccb.org/resources/IOC%20Handbook%20on%20the%20CAP%202024.pdf> to set goals for yourself and your family's faith life
- [Word on Fire](#)
- [Holy Heroes](#) for kid friendly Sunday Mass preparation
- [Catholic Icing](#) liturgical living ideas
- [Hallow prayer app](#)
- [Catholic Sprouts](#) tools for your domestic church
- <https://www.looktohimandberadiant.com/> educational resources for Catholic homes & classrooms (includes book lists for Catholic kids)
- Our Sacred Heart Emporia parish App has new resources added regularly