

ST. MATTHIAS PARISH

HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTIAN FORMATION



Parent and Youth Handbook 2021-2022

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St. Matthias Mission Statement

St. Matthias Catholic Parish is committed to continuing the ministry of Jesus Christ. We invite and welcome all. Come...live, grow and be challenged by the message, through prayer, formation and service.

High School Christian Formation Program Description

The St. Matthias High School Christian Formation Program is a 3-year program. In grades 9 & 10 students receive catechesis relative to their age. Students in high school start immediate preparation for Confirmation in 11th grade or junior year of high school.

Components of Curriculum

Curriculum Explained

Methodology

1. The first thing we use is the *High School Theology Curriculum* written by the leadership of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. This document sets out the objectives for all students in what they should know in areas of Scripture, Creedal and Doctrinal Concepts, Justice and Morality, Liturgy, Sacraments and Prayer, and finally Church History.
2. The second thing we will draw from is the six tasks of catechesis referenced in the *National Directory of Catechesis*. Four of the six tasks refer to the four pillars in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - Creed – *Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith*
 - Liturgy and Sacraments – *Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and sacraments.*
 - Morality – *Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ*
 - Prayer – *Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.*
 - Parish Community Participation – *Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.*
 - Service – *Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.*

*All excerpts were taken from the *National Directory of Catechesis* #20*

Resources

From St. Mary's Press we are using a combination of *The Catholic Youth Bible*, and the *Catholic Faith Handbook*. These components "shows young people how they can incorporate their faith into every moment – in conversations, actions, and most importantly, their hearts" (smp.org)

From Ascension Press we will be using the study program *Chosen: This is Your Catholic Faith* Read this excerpt from <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/chosen-this-is-your-catholic-faith>

“Chosen: This is Your Catholic Faith takes young people on a journey through the entire Catholic faith in all its richness and vitality. Teens will be captivated by the story, from Creation all the way through salvation history, and they will come to see how the sacraments, prayer, and discipleship are the keys to a happy life. The goal of this 24-lesson program is nothing short of winning over the hearts of teens and making them disciples of Christ.

Chosen’s carefully designed methodology features highly effective and engaging material conveyed through videos, student workbooks, and classroom experience. Featuring twelve of the top youth experts in the Church today and filmed in more than 50 locations, Chosen is unlike any program available in the Church--order your Starter Pack today.

Nihil Obstat, Imprimatur, and USCCB Conformity List”

Admission Policy

St. Matthias, in its mission to bring everyone closer to Christ, takes its mission seriously by welcoming anyone to be a part of the St. Matthias Christian Formation Program. You do not have to be a parish member to join. That being said, the mission of St. Matthias is also strongly rooted in community. Families that are part of our program are encouraged to be actively involved here at St. Matthias through Mass on weekends and service opportunities around the year.

By registering your child for the High School Formation Program, you agree to the policies outlined in this handbook.

Program Policies

This year two options for formation were offered to families at the time of registration:

1. In-person instruction
2. At-home instruction

Below are the policies in regard to both types of faith formation instruction.

****Parents/guardians may switch what kind of learning environment they would like their child in at any point during the year. Parents/guardians should contact the Director and receive acknowledgement from them. ****

In-Person Instruction

1. Families are encouraged to attend Mass on the weekends. Please see the website and bulletin for Mass schedule. A livestreamed Mass will be available on Sunday mornings.
2. Evening sessions begin promptly at 6:30 pm in the church. Classes end at 8:30 pm. Please pick up your child(ren) no later than 8:45 pm.
 - a. Students/Catechists will enter the church building using the handicap entrance labeled (C8).
 - b. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the session.
 - c. Doors will automatically close at 6:45 pm. If you need to arrive after that please contact the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation to inform them when your child(ren) will be arriving.
3. After examining all the available information in regard to the COVID-19 virus and reviewing recommended CDC guidelines the high school program will have an **optional mask policy** at the beginning of the formation year.
 - a. Students/Catechists who **are vaccinated** will be given the option to whether or not they want to wear masks.
 - b. Students/Catechists who **are not vaccinated** are strongly encouraged to wear masks while during in-person instruction.
 - c. Masks will be made available to all students/catechists present if they request one.
 - d. *****This optional mask policy will constantly be reviewed in light of updated information. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to families via email. *****
4. Students/Catechists will be screened at the handicap entrance.
 - a. Each student must have his/her temperature checked and complete a self-screening questionnaire at home prior to coming on Sunday evenings. If the answer is “yes” for any questions, or if a student has a temperature over 100.4 degrees F. the student must be kept at home and a call must be placed to Brian Jens, Director of Lifelong Faith Formation at 414-982-2406
 - b. **Before arriving at Christian Formation students should be checked for:**
 - i. Fever (at least 100.4°F)
 - ii. Chills
 - iii. Cough

- iv. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - v. Fatigue
 - vi. Muscle or body aches
 - vii. Headache
 - viii. New loss of taste or smell
 - ix. Sore throat
 - x. Congestion or runny nose
 - xi. Nausea or vomiting
 - xii. Diarrhea
- c. Any student with a temperature of 100.4 or above, may not attend Christian Formation that day. Parents/guardians will be made aware, and the student will be sent home to participate virtually.

5. **It is highly recommended that all families regardless of the option chosen create an account for Zoom at [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and practice using it. Because of the unpredictability that COVID-19 brings we may need to, at a moment's notice, switch to all virtual learning. All of this will be communicated to families by the Director and Coordinator.**

Virtual Learning & Attendance

1. Families are encouraged to attend Mass on the weekends. Please see the website and bulletin for Mass schedule. Livestream Mass will be available on Sunday mornings.
2. All families are given the option to receive religious instruction virtually. This option was included at the time of registration. The platform from which we do our sessions virtually is YouTube & Zoom.
3. The beginning (6:30 pm) and the ending (8:15 pm) of each session will be in church. Students will be able to Livestream the beginning and end for each session using YouTube live. An email will be sent out to families 30 minutes (6:00 pm) before the start of the session. In order to access the livestream parents/guardians must provide a google email address for their child to receive this link. An email will be sent out prior to the first session to get this set-up. Students should be present for both parts of the YouTube live session in church.
4. The remainder of class will take place on the Zoom platform. You can access and create a free account at [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us). Every Sunday morning a single link will be sent in an email to the parent's email address on file. Parents/Guardians will then forward this link to their children for class. This link will give you access to the Zoom call. Follow the prompts to enter the Zoom call and wait for the Director to initiate the session. The Zoom call will include all the students who are virtual for that evening and will be held from 6:45 pm following the opening prayer service until 8:15 pm when we finish in church.
5. For those families using the virtual option they will need to create an account on zoom. They can do so by going to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) In order to create a link you will need a username and password. **It is highly recommended that all families regardless of the option**

chosen create an account for Zoom and practice using it. Because of the unpredictability that COVID-19 brings we may need to, at a moment's notice, switch to all virtual learning. All of this will be communicated to families by the Director and Coordinator.

6. All students who remain virtual must keep their video screens on during the entire session. Students should be in a place where there are little distractions, and they can focus on being present to the evening session.
7. Families have the option of switching between in-person learning and the virtual option at any point in time during the year. To switch you must indicate to the Director or Coordinator prior to the next session with an acknowledgement from the Director or Coordinator.

Social Distancing

1. Per the CDC: Social distancing, also called "physical distancing," means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household.
2. To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 3 feet (about 1 arm's length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.
3. Faith Formation Staff and Catechists will practice social distancing throughout the gathering of Christian Formation. To assist students with distancing:
 - a. All rooms will have markers on the floor for physical distancing in the room.
 - b. Students and catechists will be distanced 3 feet apart.
 - c. All rooms will be open during the hours to minimize touching of doorknobs.
 - d. Catechists will practice and enforce all required PPE guidelines.

If a session needs to be moved to all virtual because of inclement weather, the Director and Coordinator will notify Channel 4, 6, & 12 on TV and their corresponding websites. An email will be sent out, and it will be posted to the website as well. Please tune into one of these sources.

Handwashing

1. Handwashing will be a routine expectation for all students. Handwashing protocols of the CDC will be stressed. Those procedures are included here. When handwashing is not possible, students and catechists will use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer stations are installed in every classroom, hallway, and entry in all buildings.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/global-covid-19/handwashing.html>

Cleaning/Disinfecting

1. All buildings will be cleaned and disinfected before and after students arrive.

Ventilation

1. All classroom doors will be open to assist with air flow. Classrooms will also be equipped with fans to assist with air movement.

Hygiene Practices

Greetings will be limited to "peace sign" or nods. Students and staff will not hug, shake hands, or use contact methods of greeting.

Responding

Confirmed COVID-19 or household member is confirmed with COVID-19.

1. Any St. Matthias Christian Formation child or catechist who test positive for COVID-19 or its variant strains, even if fully vaccinated, will need to quarantine for 10 days from the start of symptoms first appearing, be symptom-free for 24 hours prior, and provide the Faith Formation Office with evidence of child's negative COVID-19 test result and/or a release from child's healthcare provider.
2. **Positive Cases of COVID-19 in one's Household**
 - a. Any **non-vaccinated** student, faculty and staff member living in a household with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 must quarantine for a minimum of 20 days from date of symptoms first appearing and be symptom-free for 24 hours prior to returning to Christian Formation.
 - b. Any **vaccinated** student, faculty and staff members living in a household with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 may be required to quarantine for a period of time, based on the most updated information from the Milwaukee Health Department. These cases will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of vaccination status, any student, staff, or catechist living in a household with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 must immediately inform the Coordinator of Lifelong Faith Formation.
3. **Close Contact with a COVID-19 Positive Individual**
 - a. Close contact is defined as any individual who was within 3 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual for at least 15 cumulative minutes in a day. Students and their parents, staff and catechist who have been identified as a close contact will be informed, and the following protocols will be expected based on their respective vaccination status.
 - b. Any **non-vaccinated** student, catechist, or staff who come into close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, must quarantine for a minimum of 10 days from the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual and be symptom-free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.
 - c. Any **vaccinated** student, catechist, or staff who comes into close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual is expected to closely monitor her/his symptoms. Vaccinated persons may elect to seek a COVID-19 test but are not required to do so.
4. If a staff member, catechist, or student tests positive or lives with a person who tests positive, the parent/guardian of the student, catechist, or staff member **MUST REPORT it to the coordinator (or director if you cannot get a hold of the coordinator)** at:
 - a. Brian Jens (Director)- 414-982-2406 or bjens@stmatthias-milw.org
 - b. Peter Morello (Coordinator)- 414-982-2413 or pmorello@stmatthias-milw.org

NOTE: Any positive COVID-19 test will be reported to the Milwaukee Health Department and must follow Health Department guidelines for isolation and quarantining.

The following important link from the CDC provides detailed information about quarantining due to exposure or infection.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

Sacramental Preparation

1. Students start immediate preparation for Confirmation in their junior year or 11th grade. If for whatever reason your child(ren) has not received Baptism, 1st Communion, or 1st Reconciliation please call Brian Jens. Brian will work with families so they can help all students get caught up in their sacramental preparation.

Cell Phones

1. **We will be instituting a NO cell phone policy while at Christian Formation.** This means the students should have their cell phones either on vibrate or completely turned off. Also, the cell phone should not be visible during Christian Formation whether in-person or virtual.
2. Any student who is found using their cell phone during a session will be given 1 initial warning to put their phone away for the rest of the session. If the student either refuses or is found using their phone again, a phone call will follow the following morning telling parents/guardians about their child not following the policy.
3. If a student needs to have their cell phone on them parent/guardian is asked to contact Brian Jens prior to the session to inform him about reason for having their cell phone.
4. Parents/Guardians are asked to help encourage this policy. When there is no cell phone as a distraction the students can participate freely and therefore get the best experience out of every session.

Transportation

1. **Students are to arrive no earlier than 6:15 p.m. and leave no later than 8:45 p.m.** We cannot guarantee supervision outside of those times.
2. If a student is leaving early, they must provide a written and signed note or a phone call from their parents (an email or phone call from the parents earlier in the week will also suffice). We are responsible for all students from 6:30 to 8:30 pm and will not allow them to leave early without permission from their parents.



3. All students driving themselves to evening sessions must stay within the building from

the moment the session starts to when it ends. If students are caught leaving the premises or driving somewhere while the session is going on parents will be contacted.

Service Component

1. Service and volunteering are an essential aspect of being Catholic. It is one of the many disciplines that we need to develop. Our goal for every student in the Christian Formation Program as it pertains to service is:
 - a. Expose: introduce students to a variety of places to serve, different ways of serving, and different levels of service.
 - b. Expand: challenging students to start small and expand their comfort zone. Service is both rewarding and challenging.
 - c. Educate: applying what we learn on Sunday evenings to what we are doing in our everyday life.
 - d. Reflect: taking quality time to think about what you did, the impact it made on you and the people you served, and what does the experience mean in the long run.
 - e. Share (optional): how can the message and purpose of what you did be shared with the world. Students will be challenged to share their experiences in many different formats through in person testimony, in written form, group presentation, etc.

2. Instead of accumulating a certain number of hours students will be encouraged to partake of different experiences that deal with the communities they interact with on a regular basis. Below are different examples of service:
 - a. Family Community: do things with family members.
 - Example: As a family help out with St. Ben's.
 - b. School Community: Do things that impacts your school.
 - Examples: activity through a club, tutoring, coaching
 - c. Parish Community: do things to impact our parish community
 - Examples: Coaching, being a lector or cantor, server, hospitality minister, setting up decorations for Christmas and Easter, festival, or Children's Liturgy of the Word
 - d. Community At Large: do things that impacts our community at large:
 - Examples: St. Vincent De Paul, St. Ben's Meal Program

3. Anytime a service opportunity presents itself all families within Christian Formation will be emailed about the opportunity and how their children can participate.

Parent/Guardian Involvement

1. Your ability to model your faith will be how your child models theirs. It is our commitment to give quality support in your faith development. Below are some suggestions for ways for you to model and grow in your faith.

2. **Go to Mass.** If you need to recommit yourself this is a perfect time to do so.
 - a. Encounter Jesus in the Scripture readings and receive Him in the Eucharist.
 - b. Build the parish community.

- c. Reinforce your family's Catholic identity.
 - d. *Livestream and recorded Masses will be available from St. Matthias.
3. Meet your child's Catechist through a medium you are comfortable using (in-person, phone, zoom).
 4. Talk with your child about what they are learning. Ask them questions. Have discussions about their classes. Check the weekly newsletter for information on what they covered.
 5. Get involved at the parish. Visit the St. Matthias website and look under the "Get Involved" tab (<http://www.stmatthias-milw.org/get-involved/>), look for opportunities in our weekend bulletins, and see communications from the Faith Formation staff for opportunities in the parish and Christian Formation specifically.
 6. Adult Faith Formation Opportunities – throughout the year there will be opportunities for parents to get involved in Adult Faith Formation. Check the newsletter and bulletin for updates. **Please see the following link for more information: <https://www.stmatthias-milw.org/faith-formation/adult/>.**
 7. The Parish Staff of St. Matthias can assist you in whatever way you need. If you feel there is a need for something in our parish that could benefit all families in the Christian Formation Program, please do not hesitate to contact either the Director or Coordinator.
 8. **It is highly recommended that all families regardless of the option chosen to create an account for Zoom and practice using it. Because of the unpredictability that COVID-19 brings we may need to, at a moment's notice, switch to all virtual learning. All of this will be communicated to families by the Director and Coordinator.**



Communication

Communication is the cornerstone to keeping the program running smoothly. We have multiple ways of communicating, i.e., phone, email, website, etc.

Phone Calls – You may reach us at the phone numbers provided on the cover of this handbook. The phone numbers you provide allow us to reach you during the week or during the program if need be.

Emails

1. The email addresses you provide us allow us to send you information about the program and upcoming events. You can reach us with the email addresses provided on the cover of this handbook.
2. Weekly Updates
 - a. Christian Formation – during the year you will receive weekly updates sent to all of the families within Christian Formation. In these updates you will see:
 - i. Information on what was covered in the previous class
 - ii. Easy clickable links to different parts of the St. Matthias website
 - iii. Upcoming Schedule
 - iv. Parish Wide Events
 - b. Advertisements – periodically, depending on what grade your child is in, you will receive emails for service opportunities and general reminders of upcoming deadlines/events.

Website

1. The St. Matthias Parish website is loaded with information about what's happening in the parish.
2. Everything for Christian Formation is located under the "Faith Formation" tab. If you have questions, check these places:
 - a. Sunday Morning Program – information about the program.
 - b. 9th, 10th, 11th grade Christian Formation – information about the high school program and curriculum.
 - c. Formation Forms – printable schedules, service forms, handbooks, and parent forms.

Procedure for Communication

1. In order to provide everyone with the best possible program, the Director and Coordinator rely on the communication of the families to ask questions, express their concerns, or talk with someone if need be.
2. If you have a question or concern about your child's Catechist, please contact the Director or Coordinator first.
3. If you have any questions or concerns about the program in general call or email the

Director or Coordinator during office hours to discuss or set-up an appointment.

4. Contact Info

- a. Brian Jens – Director of Lifelong Faith Formation – can be reached at 414-982-2406 and bjens@stmatthias-milw.org.
 - i. Office hours are Tuesday – Friday, 8am-4pm and periodically in the evenings.
- b. Peter Morello- Coordinator of Lifelong Faith Formation – can be reached at 414-982-2413 and pmorello@stmatthias-milw.org.
 - i. Office hours are Monday, Wednesday-Friday, 8am-4pm and periodically in the evenings.



Behavioral Expectations

It Starts and Ends with R-E-S-P-E-C-T

1. All students are expected to have a level of respect that is appropriate for their age.
2. Respect The Building/Church
 - a. Students will be respectful of the buildings in which they are in sessions.
 - b. Students will demonstrate awareness of the place and situation they are in.
 - c. Students will not deface, damage, or destroy any property of St. Matthias. Families will be responsible for any costs that are incurred.
 - d. Students will be extra respectful and reverent while in church.
3. Respect for Catechists/Director & Coordinator
 - a. Students will display a high level of respect for their catechists and the Director/Coordinator.
 - b. Students will demonstrate good listening skills by listening to the catechists and following directions when asked.
4. Respect for Each Other
 - a. Students will display a high level of respect for their peers.
 - b. Students will demonstrate good listening skills by give full attention to what their peers share no matter if they agree or disagree.
 - c. Students will show respect for each person's background (where they come from, who they are as people, and where they are on their faith journey).
5. Respect Virtually
 - a. Students who are virtual will show equal respect by maintain focus and listening throughout the class.
 - b. Students will display their video to ensure they are paying attention.
 - c. Students will display their name to help the catechist and other students correctly identify who they are.

Procedure for Breaking the Rules

1. Any forms of misbehavior or disrespect will be addressed immediately.
2. If a student continues to have behavioral issues, parents will be contacted following the class to be made aware of their son/daughter's behavior.
3. If a problem persists, parents/guardians will be called immediately and will be asked to speak with the Director/Coordinator and student after class to discuss behavior.
4. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any action taken by the Director/Coordinator they may contact Deacon Stan Lowe, Parish Director, to discuss the situation.

Drugs and Weapons Policy

1. Drugs, alcohol, smoking (**including vaping**), and any drug paraphernalia are not allowed.

If any youth is found with any of these substances the parents will be called immediately, and student will be expelled from the program.

2. We hold a zero-tolerance policy for weapons of any kind. Because Steiger Hall also serves as a building for the school, if a youth is found with a weapon, in addition to the parents being called the Milwaukee Police Department will also be called immediately.

Parents/Guardians We Need You!

Parents/Guardians we are asking for your support when it comes to respect and behavior. We are here to support you just as much as we are here to support your children. You are asked to contact Brian if you have any worries, concerns, or feedback you have.

Off-Site Activities

CYM Sports – Sports league designed for high school students who don't play at the high school level. For more information, please go to the website: www.cymsports.com

1. Students who are in the High School Christian Formation Program are eligible and encouraged to participate in these seasonal sports. Such opportunities give students a chance to build community while displaying sportsmanship and gospel values.
2. Students can create a team by following the rules set out by the CYM Sports organization. Once a team is formed contact the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation.
3. These rules below are to be followed by all students participating in CYM Sports.
 - a. As stated by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee CYM Volleyball/Basketball Handbook:
An individual's participation in a parish-based team requires:
 - 1. A parent/guardian must be registered members of the parish.
 - 2. The student must: Attend parish religious education classes regularly or attend a Catholic High School.
 - 3. Seniors must have completed requirements for the Confirmation Program.
 - Archdiocesan policy states that:
 - b. There is to be NO practice or competition during the hours the involved student's parish religious education or youth ministry activities are in session.
4. Additionally, students are required in the registration process to provide times/dates of classes and time of Confirmation Retreat.
5. Anybody found falsifying information or not following these rules will have the League Director contacted by the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation with consequences coming from the League Director.
6. Attendance for all high school students in Christian Formation is a prerequisite to participating in CYM. Therefore, anybody who misses 4 sessions or more will be

deemed ineligible to play any CYM sport for the current school year.

7. Any special circumstances that present themselves will be taken on a case-by-case basis. In all cases the Parish Director has the final say.

Use of Parish Grounds and Facilities

Buildings in Use

1. The High School Christian Formation Program utilizes a number of the buildings on the St. Matthias campus including St. Matthias Church, Parish Office, and Steiger Hall.
2. Some students will have to go outside in order to reach the place where their session is taking place. Students are expected to stay with their given small group at all times. Small groups will be divided at the first session.
3. Any student caught wandering the St. Matthias campus in places other than spots used for the session will have their parents called after the session.



Safeguarding All God's Family

Classes Required by Archdiocese

- To assist in self-awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse the Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires us to do a lesson with each grade appropriate for their age level. When the session takes place, you will receive advanced notice of at least two weeks prior with a letter that will be sent home.
- The letter will indicate the time, place, and what will be covered in the lesson. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend with their child. A parent may also choose to opt out of the session. If that is the direction the parent wishes to take, they must indicate that prior to the beginning of the session and will have to give a signature verifying their decision.

We have read and agree to be governed by all policies stated in this handbook.

Detach this sheet and hand it in to Catechist before start of 1st Class.

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Parent Signature

Date
