

ST. MATTHIAS PARISH

HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTIAN FORMATION



Parent and Youth Handbook 2023-2024

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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 designed to show high school young people what being a Catholic looks like in today's world. Young people in each grade level will be introduced and mentored to practice and develop a lifestyle of habitual actions that promote discipleship. Some of these are, but are not limited to: prayer, conscience formation, active participation in liturgical celebrations, growth in relationship with Jesus, reading and interpreting Scripture, leadership opportunities, and service to the world. This is accomplished through relational ministry of young people together in both large and small group activities.

Young people who are starting their junior year of high school can also begin immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation, in which the above habits described above will be pursued and encouraged in more detail.

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 throughout the year.

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

Program Policies

1. Families are encouraged to attend Mass on the weekends. Please see the website and bulletin for our Mass schedule. A livestreamed Mass will be available on Sunday mornings.
2. Evening gatherings begin promptly at 6:30 pm in the church. Each gathering ends at 8:30 pm. Please pick up your child(ren) no later than 8:45 pm.
 - a. Young people/Catechists will enter the church building using the handicap entrance labeled (C8).
 - b. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each gathering.
 - c. Doors will automatically close at 6:45 pm. If you need to arrive after that please contact the Director of Youth & Adult Ministries to inform them when your child(ren) will be arriving.
3. It is highly recommended that all families create an account for Zoom at [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and practice using it. In the event of inclement weather, we will switch to a virtual learning environment.

If a session needs to be moved to all virtual because of inclement weather, the Director and Coordinator will notify Channels 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.

Sacramental Preparation

1. Young people 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 the Director of Youth and Adult Ministries. They will work with families so they can help all young people get caught up in their sacramental preparation.

Cell Phones

1. It should be understood that while young people are in attendance, they should not be actively using their cell phones during gatherings *unless* specifically told to do so.
2. If a conflict arises where young people are actively using their cell phones when they should not be, they will be encouraged to put their cell phones away. If a young person does not listen, parents/guardians will be called to encourage this policy.
3. If a young person needs to have their cell phone on them, the parent/guardian is asked to contact (prior to the session) to inform the Director of Youth & Adult Ministries about the reason for having their cell phone.

Transportation

1. **Young people 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 young person is leaving early, they must provide a written and signed note or a phone call from their parents/guardians (an email or phone call from the parents earlier in the week will also suffice). We are responsible for all young people from 6:30 to 8:30 pm and will not allow them to leave early without permission from their parents/guardians.
3. All young people driving themselves to evening gatherings must stay within the building from the moment the gathering starts to when it ends. If any young people are caught leaving the premises or driving somewhere while the session is going on parents/guardians 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 young person 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: challenge young people to start small and expand their comfort zone. Service is both rewarding and challenging.
 - c. Educate: apply what we learn on Sunday evenings to what we are doing in our everyday life.
 - d. Reflect: take 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. Young people 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 young people will be encouraged to partake in 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 impact 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.
4. Talk with your child about what they are learning. Ask them questions. Have discussions about their gathering. 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.
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 the Lifelong Faith Formation Office.



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 allow us to send you information about the program and upcoming events. You can reach us at 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 of Youth & Adult Ministries and Director of Religious Education 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 Co-Directors first.

3. If you have any questions or concerns about the program in general call or email the Co-Directors during office hours to discuss or set-up an appointment.
4. Contact Info
 - a. Brian Jens – Director of Youth & Adult Ministries – can be reached at 414-982-2406 and bjens@stmatthias-milw.org.
 - i. Office hours are Monday – Thursday, 8am-4pm and periodically in the evenings.
 - b. Peter Morello- Director of Religious Education – can be reached at 414-321-0893 x413 and pmorello@stmatthias-milw.org.
 - i. Office hours are Monday – Thursday, 8am-4pm and periodically in the evenings.



Behavioral Expectations

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

1. All young people are expected to have a level of respect that is appropriate for their age.
2. Respect The Building/Church
 - a. Young people will be respectful of the buildings in which they are in sessions.
 - b. Young people will demonstrate awareness of the place and situation they are in.
 - c. Young people will not deface, damage, or destroy any property of St. Matthias. Families will be responsible for any costs that are incurred.
 - d. Young people will be extra respectful and reverent while in church.
3. Respect for Catechists/Co-Directors
 - a. Young people will display a high level of respect for their catechists and the Co-Directors.
 - b. Young people will demonstrate good listening skills by listening to the catechists and following directions when asked.
4. Respect for Each Other
 - a. Young people will display a high level of respect for their peers.
 - b. Young people will demonstrate good listening skills by paying full attention to what their peers share no matter if they agree or disagree.
 - c. Young people 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).

Procedure for Breaking the Rules

1. Any forms of misbehavior or disrespect will be addressed immediately.
2. If a young person continues to have behavioral issues, parents/guardians 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 either the Director of Youth & Adult Ministries or Director of Religious Education and young person after class to discuss behavior.
4. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any action taken by the Director of Youth & Adult Ministries or Director of Religious Education they may contact the Pastor, Fr. Jerry Herda, to discuss the situation.

Drugs and Weapons Policy

1. Drugs, alcohol, smoking (**including vaping**), and any drug paraphernalia are not allowed. If any young person is found with any of these substances the parents/guardians will be called immediately, and the young person might 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 young person 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 the Director of Youth & Adult Ministries if you have any worries, concerns, or feedback.

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 young people will have to go outside in order to reach the place where their session is taking place. Young people are expected to stay with their given small group at all times. Small groups will be divided at the first session.
3. Any young person caught wandering the St. Matthias campus in places other than spots used for the session will have their parents/guardians 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/Guardians 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 the Catechist before the start of the 1st Class.

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Student Signature

Date

Grade

Parent Signature

Date
