

# CHILDREN & YOUTH FAITH FORMATION

2023-2024 PROGRAM OFFERINGS



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**The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called "the domestic church," a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.**

**-Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1666**

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# A Letter from Our Pastor and Evangelization Team

Dear Parents,

These are beautiful and exciting times at St. Gertrude! Later this year, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of our parish. We are nearing the end of a strategic planning process that will help guide where we will be going as a parish over the years and decades ahead. Under the leadership of the bishops of the United States, the Catholic Church in our country is in the midst of a three-year Eucharistic Revival meant to help all of us grow in our understanding and love of the great gift Jesus gives us of his True Presence in the Eucharist.

There are so many wonderful graces that are going to be poured out upon us this year. And for you who are parents, you can be confident that these graces will fall upon you in a special way. The Church is very clear in her beautiful teaching that parents are the primary and irreplaceable teachers of their children, in both everyday human habits and their relationships with God. The little community of the family is the domestic church, the first place the Father's love is made known to us. What St. Gertrude Church offers in its formation opportunities is meant to supplement what you are already doing for your children at home. Each of our various offerings is family-based, meaning that they either directly or indirectly involve parents. They are also child-centered, aiming to meet each of our young people where they are and invite them to take the next step in their faith.

Our hope is that the little bit of time that we spend with you and your family this year will continue to be a mustard-seed-sized invitation. Whether it's participating in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Family Faith, Confirmation Preparation, junior high youth ministry, or high school ministry, you and your family will have many opportunities to hear the word that the Lord is speaking to you and to help each other respond with a generous "yes."

This document contains the 2023-2024 roadmap for St. Gertrude Church's faith formation offerings. Within these pages, you will find a description of each of our offerings and a helpful reference for planning. Perhaps our most exciting change is to be able to offer something that many parents of our youngest children have been requesting: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd will now meet weekly, rather than bi-weekly! This allows the children to benefit the most from this extraordinary program. We've also made some adjustments to the scheduling of some of the programs so as to give families more options to attend Mass together before or after their faith formation programs.

As we head into the next year, we are blessed to be able to join you in the important work of helping your children grow in their faith and love of God. May the special graces of this jubilee year help all the families of our parish to grow in faith, in prayer, and in those virtues that reflect the goodness of God to the world.

In Christ,  
Father John Paul Walker, O.P., and the Evangelization Team

# Overview & Health and Safety Guidelines

## OVERVIEW

St. Gertrude Church is committed to supporting parents in the Christian formation of their children. We are happy to offer various child-centered and family-focused faith formation programs for children age three to grade six.

We have also developed discipleship-oriented offerings for those in junior high and high school. These offerings are rooted in our universal call to holiness, a respect for the developmental needs of adolescents, the need to support parents in this key developmental period, and the Gospel commission to "go and make disciples" (c.f. Mt. 28:19). For junior high teens (seventh and eighth graders), this includes a period of preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation, which teens receive in eighth grade.

For high school teens, this includes large group and small group experiences of shared prayer, communal life, clear and relevant teaching, and opportunities to live the apostolate.

Finally, none of our offerings would be possible without your help. We would love to talk with you about the leadership needs in our parish formation efforts. To learn more or apply for a leadership role, please contact us at (513) 561-5954, ext. 2109.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

As a parish called by Jesus Christ to care for the least and most vulnerable among us, St. Gertrude remains committed to the health and welfare—in the fullest sense possible—of all participants in our faith formation programs.

Because of this, we follow all archdiocesan Safe Environment policies\*, ensuring that all leaders and volunteers are registered in SafeParish, trained in the Protecting Children from Child Abuse program, and complete ongoing child protection training and regular background checks.

*\*To learn more about the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Safe Environment standards, please visit [catholicaoc.org/offices/safe-environment](http://catholicaoc.org/offices/safe-environment).*



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

*Children 3 Years Old\*-Grade 3*

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

St. Gertrude Church offers Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), a Montessori-influenced faith formation experience for children ages three\* through grade three. The CGS experience is threefold: the child, the adult catechist, and the prepared environment called the atrium, which is filled with beautifully handmade child-sized materials. While in the atrium, children are invited into prayer, given a presentation that is based on Scripture or liturgy, and allotted time for personal work. The catechist guides every child's need to "help me come closer to God by myself." St. Gertrude Church is happy to offer CGS Level 1 (for children ages 3\*-6) and Level 2 (for children in grades 1-3).

## SESSION TIMES

Children meet for at least 75 minutes each week in one of the atria at St. Gertrude Church. Weekly sessions allow children to gain a true familiarity with the environment and the catechist, which deepens their experience.

Parents who wish to bring their child forward to receive First Reconciliation and First Communion in second grade should be sure to enroll their child in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd as a first grader (if not before).

### Level 1 Sessions (ages 3\*-6)

- Sunday, 8:30-9:45 a.m.
- Sunday, 10-11:15 a.m.
- Sunday, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- Monday, 3:30-5 p.m.
- Tuesday, 6-7:15 p.m.
- Thursday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### Level 2 Sessions (grades 1-3)

- Sunday, 8:30-9:45 a.m.
- Sunday, 10-11:15 a.m.
- Sunday, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- Monday, 3:30-5 p.m.
- Tuesday, 6-7:15 p.m.
- Wednesday 3:45-5:15 p.m.^

*\*Children must be three years old by June 1, 2023, and fully potty-trained and independent in using the restroom. To ensure readiness, three-year-olds must attend a screening- dates TBD.*

*^Siblings of children in Level 3 have priority registration for this session.*

### Level 3 (grades 4-6)

St. Gertrude Church has one Level 3 session with limited capacity. Contact Mary Beth Thiemann at [mbthiemann@stgertrude.org](mailto:mbthiemann@stgertrude.org) for more details.

## COST

Both CGS Level 1 and Level 2 cost \$80/child.

**For more information about CGS, please visit [stgertrude.org/cgs](http://stgertrude.org/cgs).  
To register your child, please visit [buytickets.at/stgertrude](http://buytickets.at/stgertrude).**



# Sacramental Formation (Parent/Child)

*Generally for Children in Grade 2*

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

With parents being the primary educators of their children, St. Gertrude Church collaborates with you in the year of preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. The monthly Sacramental Formation sessions with your child are Scripture-based, include key Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) presentations, and provide the practical knowledge needed to receive the aforementioned sacraments. These times of catechesis and prayer will become sacred memories for you and your child.

## PROGRAM ELEMENTS & SESSION TIMES

If your child attends a public or private school that does not teach CGS, you need to register him or her for CGS Level 2 and Sacramental Formation. If your primary form of education is homeschooling, you need to register your child for Sacramental Formation; however, participation in CGS Level 2 is also encouraged!

### Sacramental Formation Sessions\*

Parents and children will come together in small groups once a month November-April.

- 2nd Sundays, 1:30-2:45 p.m.
- 3rd Sundays, 1:30-2:45 p.m.
- 2nd Tuesdays 4:30-5:45 p.m.

*\*Please Note: Some dates may be adjusted during the year.*

### Important Dates

- Opening Session: September 24, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- Mass of Enrollment: October 14, 11:30 a.m.
- Retreat at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center: April 26-27
- First Reconciliation: **TBD**
- First Communion: May 4

## COST

Sacramental Formation costs \$40/child.



**For more information about Sacramental Formation, please visit [stgertrude.org/sacramentalformation](http://stgertrude.org/sacramentalformation).**

**To register your child, please visit [buytickets.at/stgertrude](http://buytickets.at/stgertrude).**



# Family Faith

## Children in Grades 4-6

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Perhaps startlingly, research has shown that children typically begin to make key decisions about belief in God and practice of faith in fifth grade. And though it may be hard to see when we are in the thick of family life, the influence of parents in children's faith journeys is of first importance.

With that knowledge, we offer Family Faith, a family-focused, child-centered formation for children in grades 4-6. In Family Faith, parents and children gather once a month for fellowship, hands-on activities, and opportunities to learn and pray together.

Each month, we also host a second session just for the children. This second meeting reviews the presentation from the family meeting and allows the children time to talk, play, and learn with their peers through hands-on projects.

### SESSION TIMES

Family Faith meets two times per month, once with parents and children together, and once with children only.

#### Family Faith Sessions (September-April)

- 1st & 3rd Sundays, 10-11:15 a.m.
- 1st & 3rd Sundays, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- 1st & 3rd Tuesdays\*, 6-7:15 p.m.

*\*Some exceptions to this schedule occur due to holidays.*



#### Please Note

- This program happens simultaneously with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. If you have younger children (ages 3-9) in your family, they will be in the atrium at the same time you (parents) and your children in grades 4-6 are in the school cafeteria for Family Faith.
- Junior high and high school students are encouraged to attend Family Faith as well, at no cost. Even if the content is ultimately geared toward children in grades 4-6, there is always something to learn, and older children have an opportunity to teach their younger siblings.

### COST

Family Faith costs \$80/child.

**For more information about Family Faith, please visit [stgertrude.org/familyfaith](http://stgertrude.org/familyfaith).  
To register your child, please visit [buytickets.at/stgertrude](http://buytickets.at/stgertrude).**

# Confirmation Preparation

## Youth in Grades 7-8

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Our sacramental formation for Confirmation aims to help young men and women grow in understanding of the faith and deepen their relationship with Christ and his Church. It also gives these teens the confidence they need to be light in their homes, schools, and social settings. We offer a two-year formation process for all seventh and eighth graders of the parish who wish to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church through the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation at the end of their eighth grade year.\* **Those who intend to receive the sacrament will commit to participate in formation meetings consisting of activities, talks, small group discussions, and prayer experiences, along with several other commitments and events, including a Personal Spiritual Plan (done with parents and mentors), a retreat, a teaching Mass, and sponsor/candidate formation.**

### PROGRAM ELEMENTS & SESSION TIMES

#### Expectations for All Candidates (Grades 7-8)

*Elements in gold are new for 2023-2024*

- Parent-Candidate Sessions (parents and candidates attend): **August 27, 2023; January 14, 2024; April 28, 2024 | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 a.m.**
- **Initial Letter:** A letter from each candidate about why he or she is entering preparation
- Confirmation Retreat: Saturday, November 11, 2023 (all day commitment)
- Formation Meetings (candidates only): **September-April, second and fourth Sundays | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 a.m.**
- Personal Spiritual Plans: Regular meetings throughout the year with parents and mentors
- Teaching Mass (attend one of two options): Tuesday, January 16 or 30, 2024

#### Expectations for Eighth Grade Only

- Baptismal certificate on record
- Letter to the Pastor: A brief letter demonstrating an understanding of and desire to receive Confirmation
- Sponsor Meeting: Sunday, February 4, 2024 | 1:15-3 p.m.
- Confirmation Rehearsal: Friday, April 19, 2024 | 6-8 p.m.
- Confirmation Mass: April 21, 2024 | 2 p.m. (brief reception to follow)

### COST

Sacramental formation for Confirmation costs \$80/child.

*\*St. Gertrude School, homeschooled, and other Catholic school students are welcome and encouraged to participate in our Confirmation Preparation program as a supplement to in-class instruction; however, they are not required to participate in the entire program to be confirmed at the parish. Some key elements may still be expected. Contact the coordinator of youth formation to learn more and to determine the best support for your child's formation.*

**For more information about L'alto: Confirmation, please visit [stgertrude.org/confirmation](https://stgertrude.org/confirmation).  
To register your child, please visit [buytickets.at/stgertrude](https://buytickets.at/stgertrude).**



# Junior High Youth Ministry

*Youth in Grades 7-8*

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

As young men and women enter adolescence, they begin to take ownership and direction of their lives, to wrestle with questions like, "What is happiness?", "Where do I fit in?", "Who do I want to be?" Our junior high youth ministry invites emerging adolescents in grades seven and eight to ask those questions, form deeper friendships, receive guidance from mentors, and live more deeply from their identities as sons and daughters of the living God.

## PROGRAM ELEMENTS & SESSION TIMES

Our junior high youth ministry consists of small groups and other activities throughout the school year. Once we have a list of young men and women who are interested in joining these small groups, we will work with parents and families to find group mentors in faith and life who will meet with these small groups to share the Christian vision for fullness of life. Small group meeting dates and times will be determined by parents and group participants.

## COST

There is no cost to join a small group. Other activities may have a cost and are at the discretion of the participants.

**For more information about junior high youth ministry,  
please visit [stgertrude.org/juniorhigh](http://stgertrude.org/juniorhigh)**



# L'alto: High School

*Teens in Grades 9-12*



## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

All teens in grades nine through twelve are invited to live an adventurous life, a courageous life—the Christian life. L'alto: High School provides a powerful experience of Christian community through shared life, prayer, formation, and mission. Inspired by Acts 2:42, the four pillars of Dominican life, and the magnanimous life of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, L'alto: High School cultivates time and space for teens to become who God has created them to be and to set the world on fire for love of Christ.

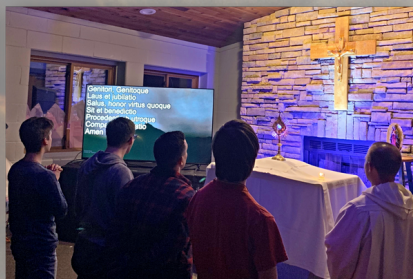
## PROGRAM ELEMENTS & SESSIONS TIMES

Large and small group experiences of shared prayer, communal life, clear and relevant teaching, and opportunities to live the apostolate.

- Large Group & Small Group Sessions: Every Sunday during the school year (September 10, 2023–May 5, 2024, except holidays) from 7 to 9 p.m. at St Gertrude Church
- Other Small Group Sessions: Collaborate with the coordinator of high school ministry to build a small group with other teens that will meet on a different day and/or time during the week
- Retreats and outings throughout the year

## COST

FREE! There is no cost to attend the L'alto: High School weekly sessions. The cost of other retreats and activities varies based upon the event.



For more information about L'alto: High School,  
please visit [stgertrude.org/highschool](https://stgertrude.org/highschool)



# Program Offerings Recap

## CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - AGE 3–GRADE 3

### Level 1 Sessions (ages 3\*–6)

- Sunday, 8:30–9:45 a.m.
- Sunday, 10–11:15 a.m.
- Sunday, 11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
- Monday, 3:30–5 p.m.
- Tuesday, 6–7:15 p.m.
- Thursday, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

### Level 2 Sessions (grades 1–3)

- Sunday, 8:30–9:45 a.m.
- Sunday, 10–11:15 a.m.
- Sunday, 11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
- Monday, 3:30–5 p.m.
- Tuesday, 6–7:15 p.m.
- Wednesday 3:45–5:15 p.m.^

*\*Children must be 3 years old by June 1, 2023, and fully potty-trained and independent in using the restroom. To ensure readiness, 3 year olds must attend a screening- dates TBD. ^Siblings of children in Level 3 have priority registration for this session.*

## SACRAMENTAL FORMATION - GRADE 2

- Opening Session: September 24, 1:30–3:30 p.m.
- Mass of Enrollment: October 14, 11:30 a.m.
- Monthly parent/child sessions from November–April
- Retreat at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center: April 26–27
- First Reconciliation: TBD
- First Communion: May 4

## FAMILY FAITH - GRADES 4–6

- 1st & 3rd Sundays, 10–11:15 a.m.
- 1st & 3rd Sundays, 11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
- 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 6–7:15 p.m.

## CONFIRMATION PREPARATION - GRADES 7–8

### All Candidates (Grades 7–8)

- Parent-Candidate Sessions: August 27, 2023; January 14, 2024; April 28, 2024 | 10–11:15 a.m. or 11:30–12:45 a.m.
- Confirmation Retreat: Saturday, November 11, 2023 (all day commitment)
- Formation Meetings (candidates only): September–April, second and fourth Sundays | 10–11:15 a.m. or 11:30–12:45 a.m.
- Personal Spiritual Plans (regular meetings)
- Teaching Mass (attend one): January 16 or 30, 2024

### Eighth Grade Only

- Sponsor Meeting: Sunday, February 4, 2024, 1:15–3 p.m.
- Confirmation Rehearsal: Held Friday prior to the Confirmation Mass (Date TBA)
- Confirmation Mass: Date TBA (brief reception to follow)

## JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH MINISTRY - GRADES 7–8

Small groups; dates will be established when groups form

## L'ALTO: HIGH SCHOOL - GRADES 9–12

- Large Group & Small Group Sessions: Every Sunday during the school year from 7 to 9 p.m.
- Other Small Group Sessions
- Retreats and outings throughout the year

**For more details about all of our offerings, visit [stgertrude.org/childrenandyouth](https://stgertrude.org/childrenandyouth).**

# How to Register

**Please follow these steps to register your child(ren) for faith formation.**

1. Visit [buytickets.at/stgertrude](http://buytickets.at/stgertrude).
2. Click "Faith Formation Offerings 2023-2024."
3. Click "Register HERE."
4. From the drop-down box, select the number of children you want to enroll in your preferred class offering, according to their age and grade.
5. Click "Next."
6. Fill out your information as the parent/guardian.
  - a. if you are registering 4 or more children, email [kristen@stgertrude.org](mailto:kristen@stgertrude.org) and request one of the **Promo Codes** listed below.
7. Fill out the information for each child under their selected class offering.
8. Click "Next."
9. Enter payment information and click "Pay."
10. Click "Complete."

## Promo Codes:

- if you are registering 4 children, request a **4thChildFree** code for an \$80 discount
- if you are registering 5 children, request a **4thand5thChildFree** code for a \$160 discount
- if you are registering 6 children, request a **4th5thand6thChildFree** code for a \$240 discount.

We do not want finances to keep you and your children from participating in faith formation. If you need additional discounts or the full tuition amount to be waived, please send an email to [kristen@stgertrude.org](mailto:kristen@stgertrude.org) or reach out to our pastor, Father John Paul Walker, at [frjohnpaul@stgertrude.org](mailto:frjohnpaul@stgertrude.org).

**Registration will remain open from April 13, 2023, to June 10, 2023.**

**If you have any questions about registration or our faith formation offerings, please contact on our team.**



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