



Middle School Youth Ministry

A Joint Ministry of St. Bartholomew & Holy Family Parishes

Dear Parents,

We write to you as two pastors who love the Lord and count it a genuine privilege to serve your families. We want to share some exciting news about a ministry we believe has the potential to make a lasting difference in the lives of your children!

What is Duc In Altum?

Duc In Altum is a youth ministry program — and beginning this fall, it becomes a joint effort between St. Bartholomew and Holy Family parishes. *Duc in altum* means, “put out into the deep,” and comes from Jesus’ words to Simon-Peter in Luke 5:4, when the Lord instructed Simon the fisherman to cast his nets over the other side of the boat and lower them into the deep for the abundant catch. We want to help your children discover the abundant life offered to us by living in the deep, deep relationship with Christ and His Church. *Open to all 5th through 8th graders* in our parishes, whether enrolled in our respective Catholic schools or elsewhere, Duc In Altum is designed to engage and bombard young hearts and minds with the beauty, excitement, and adventure of the Catholic faith! Through high-energy games, infectious joy, meaningful small group discussion led by committed young-adult mentors and on-fire disciples, and Eucharistic adoration, our goal is not merely to teach kids about Jesus, but to introduce them *to* Jesus — to draw them into a living relationship with Him and a genuine love for His Church.

Duc In Altum meets on Monday evenings from 7:00 – 8:30 PM in Saunders Hall at St. Bartholomew parish. For all dates, see the attached calendar. Students can be dropped off at either Door E or Door O.

Our Heart Behind This Ministry

We know your families are busy. Between school, sports, and activities, the last thing we want is to add another burden to your plate. We offer Duc In Altum as a supplement to your efforts as parents — because we know how hard it is to help kids, who typically struggle with the faith during those adolescent and teenage years, come to genuinely love the Church and love the Lord. Moms and dads, we’re on your team! All we want is to help your children know Jesus, learn what it means to live in friendship with Jesus, and become lifelong Catholics who not only stay in the Church, but actually *love* being Catholic!

Attendance Expectations by Grade

5th & 6th Grade: We warmly encourage regular attendance! There are no formal requirements — simply an open invitation to come, have fun, and encounter the Lord and grow in the faith. Yes, even for our children already enrolled in our Catholic schools! Duc In Altum will take the learning in the theology classroom from the head into the heart!

7th Grade: In the Diocese of Cleveland, Confirmation preparation spans two years. We are designating 7th grade as the year of remote preparation. We ask that 7th graders make a genuine effort to attend at least **half** of all sessions — ideally more.

8th Grade: The 8th grade year serves as the year of immediate preparation for Confirmation. We want our 8th graders to be there, present, growing and having fun throughout the Fall semester of *Duc In Altum*. Then, beginning in January, 8th graders will participate in a separate Confirmation track — joining Fr. Patrick and or Fr. David for a dedicated Confirmation talk/teaching/formation session, followed by focused small group discussion with their 8th grade small group leaders — while 5th through 7th graders continue together in their own session. Because of this intentional structure during the Spring semester (January through April), we ask that 8th graders attend at least **two-thirds** of those Monday nights. 8th graders in the Spring semester will be dropped off in the same location as in the Fall.

We want to be clear: we're hoping you won't approach this from a "bare minimum" perspective. We're inviting you to see this as an extraordinary opportunity to set your child up for a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. But we're also reasonable, and we genuinely want to work with you. If conflicts arise, come talk to us — we will help find a solution.

****8th grade only****

The Damascus Confirmation Retreat

One of the most exciting new elements this year is a Confirmation retreat for our 8th graders at Damascus Catholic Mission Campus (September 11–13, 2026). Fr. David and Fr. Patrick have both worked with Damascus for over a decade, and we can say without hesitation: *there is no retreat experience better suited to setting young hearts on fire for Christ!* Damascus is a thoroughly Catholic mission campus located in Centerburg, OH (about an hour and a half drive), staffed by dozens of college-aged missionaries who are thoroughly trained, rigorously vetted, and fully compliant with all Diocesan safe environment standards. Their retreats are *exceptional* — and they unequivocally change lives! The leadership of Damascus Catholic Mission Campus have collectively served in youth ministry for decades, and their methods and approach have proven themselves over and over again. St. Paul encountered the Lord Jesus in a life-changing way while on the road to Damascus 2000 years ago. Tens of thousands of young people from all over the country can now tell the same story because of attending a retreat at Damascus Catholic Mission Campus!

We are excited to share that through the generosity of donors from both parishes, the retreat registration fee for the Damascus Confirmation retreat has been entirely covered! Normally it costs \$165.00 per student to attend; If those specific retreat dates present a conflict, we can explore other Damascus Confirmation retreat dates later in the year, or a local diocesan parish one-day retreat option. We will not let cost or scheduling be a barrier.

More information about Damascus can be found by following the QR code at the end of this letter. Also, feel free to visit damascus.net, and/or go on [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search "Damascus Camper Testimonial" and be ready with your box of tissues!

2026 - 2027 Duc In Altum Program Fees

5th – 8th Grade: \$100.00 / student. If you have more than one child participating in *Duc In Altum*, any additional child will be \$50.00, with a family maximum capped out at \$150.00.

These fees support snacks, materials, and the resources needed to offer your children the highest quality ministry we can. This is not about profit — it's about making excellent formation and ministry possible. If

the cost presents any difficulty, please speak with us. We will not let finances or scheduling be a barrier to participation. We ask that all fees be submitted by **August 30, 2026**. When you register online using the QR code at the end of this letter, you have the ability to pay online. You may also drop off a check to the parish office, and in the memo line, please indicate "Duc In Altum fee."

Registration Forms

To register, you can either fill out the enclosed paperwork and return it the parish office of St. Bartholomew, or, using the QR code, you can register and complete all the necessary forms online. Please fill out (and return) all forms by **August 30, 2026**.

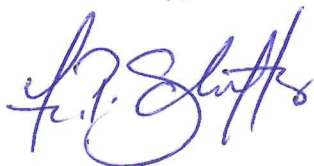
****8th grade only****

How to Register for the Damascus Confirmation retreat

In the parent packet sent to 8th grade parents, there is a separate form and link to register. You will be provided a code that zero's out the registration cost when you submit your registration. We will be organizing and providing bus transportation down to Damascus on Friday September 11th, departing the school parking lot at 4:15 pm. However, parents are asked to pick up their child from Damascus on Sunday September 13th, arriving at 10:00 am for the closing remarks, camper testimonials, and closing Mass which covers your Sunday obligation. You must register for the Damascus Confirmation retreat by **August 28, 2026**.

We hope this gives you everything you need to plan ahead for a great year — but for now, enjoy the summer! We look forward to journeying with your families this fall, and we remain always available for any questions you may have.

Under the Mercy,



Fr. Patrick Schultz.
Pastor, St. Bartholomew parish



Fr. David Stavarz
Pastor, Holy Family parish