

Christ the King Parish Faith Formation Parent/Student Handbook 2025-26



Clergy and Faith Formation Staff

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Dear Faith Formation Families:

On behalf of Maureen Hance and myself, I am pleased and excited to welcome you to a new year of Faith Formation at Christ the King Parish. Our collaboration with St. Theresa's continues to bear great fruit for our program and we are grateful for their assistance and dedication with the sacramental workshops in grades 2, 3 and 9.

We continue this year with the "Faith and Life" series which has been very well received by families and teachers alike. As many have already noted, it is much more informative and robust, and yet remains accessible, as compared to other curricula used in the past.

But, as amazing and dedicated as our teachers and the curriculum are, neither can replace the regular living of the faith day-to-day in the home by such things as regular attendance at weekend Mass, praying as a family, regular use of the Sacraments (especially Confession) and reviewing your child(ren)'s lessons with them. "Faith and Life" includes a family guide component for grades 1 through 7, that you will receive each week, to reinforce the lessons covered in class. We cannot possibly hope for everything to sink in, let alone to be understood and lived, when exposed to it for only an hour a week in our classrooms. We cannot underestimate or disregard the importance of your example and involvement in the faith-life of your children. If other things are allowed to take priority over weekend worship and living the Faith day-to-day, how can we expect our children to take us seriously? How can we expect them to develop that relationship with Our Lord and His Church that we want them to have? That relationship with Our Lord and His Church is critical for life and their well-being in this often confused and confusing world. For this reason, regular attendance at class and at weekend Mass (either at Christ the King or another Catholic Church) are required components of our formation program. Also, Mass attendance is one of the Commandments and a required component of faithfully living our Faith!

The goal of our program is to augment and fine tune the religious education by word and example that has begun and continues in your home. During Sacrament Years particularly, we take extra care to ensure that your child understands and appreciates the significance and meaning of the Sacrament and how it will help them to grow in holiness and in their relationship with Our Lord. The Sacraments should be taken most-seriously, not just because they are milestones in life, but because they are milestones in our relationship with Our Lord which give us God's Grace to live that relationship more deeply and with greater holiness and strength in our world.

Please contact the Faith Formation Office with any questions. With you, I look forward to another great year of Faith Formation.

Fr. Gemza

Rev. Richard J. Gemza, Pastor

Christ the King (CTK) Faith Formation Program Mission

Our mission is:

- To support the religious education of children that occurs at home.
- To foster enthusiasm for living the Catholic faith.
- To give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- To encourage family participation in the life of the church.
- To encourage prayer which leads to a deeper relationship with God.

Class Location, Schedules, Inclement Weather, Attendance

- **Location/Schedule:** All classes are taught in the CTK Parish Center. Parking is available in the lot closest to the Parish Center or in the lot at the front of the church. To enter the Parish Center, use the side door of the church near the flagpole.
- **Class Schedules:** Classes for grades 1 – 7 meet in the afternoons after school from the last week in September through the middle of April. Confirmation preparation classes for grades 8 and 9 meet on alternating Wednesday evenings through the end of February/early March. Breaks are scheduled throughout the year, corresponding to the Church Liturgical Year and local school schedules. Students in Sacramental preparation years - grades 2, 3, and 9 - are required to attend additional workshops at St. Theresa School, Trumbull CT. Dates and times of these workshops will be communicated well in advance.
- **Closings/Cancellations:** If the Trumbull Public School System cancels or dismisses classes early due to inclement weather, all Religious Education classes are cancelled for that day. If the Trumbull Public School System dismisses classes at the regular time but inclement weather is forecasted, we will decide as soon as we have sufficient information whether to hold Religious Education classes on that day. Cancellation notices will be posted on the Parish website www.christthekingtrumbull.org and check your email. If we have not cancelled class but you are concerned about travel conditions, use your best judgment whether to bring your children to class. Absences due to inclement weather will be treated as excused absences. In most cases, classes cancelled due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled.
- **Class Attendance and Absences:** By enrolling your children in religious education class, you have made meaningful instruction in the Catholic Faith a priority for your family. As with other classes or activities, regular attendance at faith formation class is crucial for students to master the curriculum, which builds from class to class, and to develop their Faith through consistent participation in a classroom community. Students are required to attend all Religious Education classes and scheduled activities for the full duration of each class period.

An excused absence would be for an unexpected serious situation such as an illness or a family emergency. If your child will be absent from class, please email the Faith Formation coordinator explaining why. Missed classes must be made up and the catechist will provide a take-home assignment, which must be handed in. Students who arrive or leave class more than 10 minutes late or early to accommodate conflicting activities (e.g., sports practices or games, dance, or music lessons etc.) must also complete a take-home assignment.

Policies and Procedures for Safety, Conduct and Discipline

- **Safe Environments:** CTK Parish is committed to ensuring respect for the human dignity of all students, parents, volunteers, and staff members. Religious Education is possible only in an environment that embodies that respect. Accordingly, CTK parish follows the Diocese of Bridgeport mandate by participating in the VIRTUS - Protecting God's Children program, which helps churches and religious organizations refine their roles as safe havens for children and empowers them with new tools to help them protect children. The program is comprehensive and multidimensional – incorporating the best-proven standards and practices to prevent child sexual abuse and make the parish safe for all people—especially children. All adult volunteers (18 years or older) in the Religious Education Program must be VIRTUS certified. They also must pass a background check, in compliance with the guidelines of the Diocese of Bridgeport's Safe Environments Program and Guidelines. For more information about the VIRTUS program go to www.virtus.org.
- **Student Arrival and Dismissal:** The safety and security of all students, parents and designated adults is our **highest** priority. To this end, we are implementing the following mandatory arrival and dismissal procedures. We anticipate your cooperation in following them:
 - **If your child is in Grades 1 - 5:** Parents must accompany their children *to* and *from* the classroom. *At all times, children must be under the supervision of a parent, legal guardian, or the adult designated in writing as set out below.* All students in grades 1 through 5, must be signed-out of their class and released to a parent/guardian or an authorized adult. A parent/guardian may designate an adult (18 years or older) who can also pick up their child by completing a Pick-Up Authorization Form at registration.
 - Parents may also provide the catechist with a written note signed by the parent stating the name, cell phone number, and their relationship to the child whereby designating another adult (18 years or older) who may pick up their child for a single occurrence. Catechists will only accept these notes directly from a parent prior to the class. Catechists may request a photo I.D. to verify the identity of a designated person and will not release the child without such ID. Catechists will not release students, grades 1-5, to the sole custody of a minor sibling or other minor child.
 - **If your child is in Grades 6-7:** Students may be dropped off at the Parish Center entrance at the side of the church near flagpole. Students should report to their assigned rooms. For dismissal, parents need to enter the building and sign-out their child at their classroom (grades 6 and 7).
 - **If your child is in Grades 8-9: Students** may be dropped off and picked up at the Parish Center entrance at the side of the church near flagpole, without having a parent sign in/out- **provided the parent has signed and submitted the Pickup Release Form.**
 - **If you have children attending multiple grades during the same session:** Parents must follow the arrival and dismissal procedures applicable to the youngest child in that session. Children in grades 1-5 *may not* be accompanied, dropped off, or signed-out by older siblings even in the same session.
- **Building Access:** All doors to the parish center will be locked, except briefly during arrival or dismissal. Access to the building will be controlled only by the Faith Formation Coordinator and hall monitors. Parents and children are not to open any doors to allow a person to enter the building, unless requested to do so by the coordinator or hall monitor. During arrival or dismissal, hall monitors will open the doors to facilitate entry or exit. During times other than arrival or dismissal, hall monitors will watch the doors and allow a parent or designated adult in upon arrival. There is a doorbell to ring to let us know you have arrived. Please ring and wait for someone to open the door for you. Hall monitors may request names and picture identification to allow entry.

- **Classrooms, Hallways and Restrooms:** Upon arrival, students shall report to their classrooms and remain in them for the duration of class, unless a catechist escorts the entire class into the church or parish hall. Students will not loiter in the hallways. Students should use the restroom, as necessary, before entering class to avoid leaving during class. Parents will be notified and will be expected to speak to their child if the child frequently requests to use the bathroom in a manner that disrupts class.
- **Food and Drink:** Students may not bring food or drink (besides water) at any time into the classrooms or parish hall.
- **Electronic Devices and Cell Phones:** iPads and other electronic devices should not be brought to class. If a catechist or member of the Religious Education Staff determines a student has such an electronic device and is accessing it during class, they may remove it from the student for the class. The device will be returned at the end of class. During class, cell phones must remain off or set to “silent” mode and put away. No child may text or use the internet for personal browsing. In their discretion, catechists may require students to place cell phones in a bin upon entering the classroom, to be returned to the students at the end of class or may take a phone away from a particular student for the duration of a class as necessary for class management or another appropriate reason. Please be certain that all cell phones brought to class are marked, labeled, or otherwise readily identified as belonging to your child.
- **Prohibited Items:** While at the Christ the King students may not possess, use, or distribute any items, materials, or substances (referred to together as “Items”) that potentially could cause serious harm to themselves or to others, could cause considerable damage to property, or that students are legally prohibited from possessing. This includes fireworks, weapons of any kind, alcohol, tobacco, traditional or e- cigarettes, controlled substances, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, or medications prescribed to persons other than the student. If a catechist or member of the Religious Education Staff determines that a student possesses any of these Items, the catechist or staff member may, in their discretion:
 - Remove the Item from the student for the duration of the class. The Item will be returned after class is complete, only to the parent or designated adult; or
 - If the Item poses an imminent risk of harm to anyone, remove the student from the classroom, and call the parent or designated adult or, if they cannot be reached the emergency contact listed on the medical form. The parent or adult contacted will be expected immediately to pick up the student and remove him or her from the campus. The student will not be allowed to return to class until the student and parents have met separately with the Pastor and Coordinator of Religious Education to reach an agreed resolution of the matter. If warranted to maintain safety or security or to address an imminent risk, a catechist or staff member may immediately call local law enforcement for assistance.
- **Conduct and Discipline:** At all times, volunteers, students, parents, and families are expected to display Christian attitudes of honesty, mutual respect, responsibility, consideration and love for oneself, clergy, staff, catechists, fellow students, and parish property. If a student’s behavior becomes a distraction for other children before, during, or after class, parents will be notified by phone, in writing, or in person. We will work together to reach a mutually agreed solution, up to and including requesting the parent’s presence in the classroom as a one-on-one aide for your child. There is a discipline policy in place and every catechist will be following the same procedures. Students disrupting class may be removed from the classroom. Persistent disruptive behavior will result in a child being removed from the Program for the remainder of the year if a solution cannot be found. In addition, students who engage in the following behavior at Christ the King will be subject to appropriate and immediate disciplinary action, which may include short- or long-term removal from the classroom, removal from the Program for remainder of the year, or restitution:
 - **Using Inappropriate Language.** Volunteers and students shall refrain from using vulgar or obscene language, language that taunts, bullies, or teases another person, or language that disparages persons based on gender, race or national origin, religious beliefs, or other personal characteristics.
 - **Fighting,** physically assaulting another person or any inappropriate touching of another person.
 - **Stealing, damaging, or destroying the property** of another person, including students, parents or volunteers of the Religious Education Program or the parish. Found items should be delivered to a catechist, volunteer, or the Faith Formation Coordinator.
 - **Grievance/Complaint;** If a child has trouble during class, please directly contact the Faith Formation Coordinator as soon as the difficulty arises, either in person or in writing and we will work with you to achieve a mutually agreed solution.