

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA
MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY
CONFIRMATION
PARENT / YOUTH HANDBOOK
2020-2021



“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for believers in speech, in life, in love and in purity.”

1Timothy 4:12

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PARENT LETTER.....	3
YOUTH MINISTRY IS.....	4
GUIDELINES/EXPECTATIONS.....	6
CURRICULUM.....	8
MYTHS ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY.....	9
CONFIRMATION.....	10

Dear St. Catherine of Siena's Parents,

Welcome to the St. Catherine of Siena's Youth Ministry. Thank you for allowing us to support you and your teenagers during this important time in your lives. St. Catherine of Siena Parish provides many opportunities for youth to participate in Middle School Youth Ministry. I invite you to read through this handbook with your teen(s) and discover ways they can be involved.

Just as there are many opportunities for our teens to be involved, there are many parent roles to be filled. Parents, we invite you to...

- † **VOLUNTEER** in our youth ministry. There are MANY opportunities, times, tasks:
 - Assist at one or more of the Sunday evening sessions (requirement).
 - Help lead a fundraiser or a service project.
 - Be a chaperone for one of the social events.
 - Provide a snack for a Sunday evening session or sponsor a monthly pizza party.

- † **PRAY...Pray *for*** your teen. Pray with your teen. Pray for all the adult leaders and staff who teach, lead, and spend time sharing the Word of God with our young people.

- † **PARTICIPATE IN THE LITURGICAL & SACRAMENTAL LIFE** of our parish. Go to Mass weekly/regularly. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. Be an active member of St. Catherine of Siena Parish. Get involved!

- † **SHARE YOUR OWN FAITH STORIES** with your teen. Share why your faith is important to you. Talk about the joys as well as your struggles and doubts in your efforts to live out your Catholic faith. Can they see in your life the joy and freedom that your faith gives you?

- † **ENCOURAGE YOUR TEEN** to honestly examine their faith, to seek and listen for God's will in all areas of their life through regular prayer, reflection, and time with Scripture.

Let us pray together for this wonderful ministry in our parish and in particular for the young people in our parish.

God Bless,

Ashley Blank

Ashley Blank

Coordinator of Faith Formation

Youth Ministry Is...

GOALS OF COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH MINISTRY

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops have set forth three goals in their document “Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry” (1997). St. Catherine of Siena Parish adopts these goals, as our own in ministering to the young people of our parish. These goals are:

- 1) **To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.**
- 2) **To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.**
- 3) **To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.**

These goals are brought to reality for our parish through the utilization of the following components of comprehensive ministry of the Church.

ADVOCACY – engages the Church to examine its priorities and practice to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community.

CATECHESIS – helps adolescents develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and increase their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith; helps young people enrich and expand their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition and their application of life today, and live more faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives, especially through a life of prayer, justice, and service.

COMMUNITY LIFE – builds an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and acceptance that models Catholic principles; develops meaningful relationships; and nurtures Catholic faith. The ministry of community life is not only what we do (activity), but who we are (identity) and how we interact (relationships).

EVANGELIZATION – shares the good news of the Gospel and invites young people to know Jesus personally. It enables young people to uncover and name the experience of a God already active and present in their lives.

JUSTICE & SERVICE – nurtures in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; empowers young people to work for justice, peace, and human dignity.

PASTORAL CARE – is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus’ care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need. It involves promoting positive adolescent and family development, caring for youth and families in crisis, and providing guidance in making life decisions and moral choices.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP – celebrates and deepens young people’s relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer, and liturgical experiences; it awakens their awareness of the Spirit at work in their lives; it incorporates young people more fully in the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharist; it nurtures their personal prayer life; and it fosters family rituals and prayer.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY INCLUDES:

- ✝ Sunday Evening Sessions
- ✝ Confirmation Preparation
- ✝ Service Projects
- ✝ Liturgical Roles
- ✝ Retreats/Trips
- ✝ Social Events
- ✝ Spiritual Events
- ✝ Fundraisers
- ✝ Youth Leadership

Guidelines and Expectations

COMMUNICATION TO YOUTH, PARENTS, and PARISH

Information on Middle School Youth Ministry is distributed and available through:

- Youth Ministry E-mail updates. Email: ashley.blank@dor.org
- The Parish Bulletin
- Postcard/Letter Mailings

CELL PHONES

Although cell phones are a convenient form of communication today, they are often a disruption to ministry, especially during extended programs such as retreats and sessions. Youth are asked to be fully present while at youth ministry events and to either leave their phones at home or to keep them in a pocket or purse during events. If they are used during a youth ministry event, they will be taken away for the remainder of the event.

EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH

In order to create a successful Catholic Christian community, members must realize the responsibilities and the commitment involved in participating in Middle School Youth Ministry. Here are some expectations that promote pride in self, others, and the group:

- Participate in the group as fully as you are able.
- Be on time for group sessions/events.
- Be responsible for your own feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Always speak for yourself never for someone else.
- Suspend negative attitudes and put-downs toward yourself and others.
- Respect the feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of others.
- Listen to what others have to say.
- Stay on topic.
- Use positive statements towards others.
- Any physical, emotional, social, or verbal aggression made to youth leaders, assistants, other youth, or yourself will not be tolerated and will result in immediate suspension.
- Stay with the group throughout the meeting time. Youth are not allowed to leave the Middle School Youth Ministry session early unless a parent presents him/herself to the youth leaders for release.

DISCIPLINE

We are about building Christian community. This calls for respect of self, others, God, and the facilities. It asks for everyone to act in a responsible Christian manner. At times, however, unsatisfactory conduct may occur and will be handled in the following manner.

Illegal Behaviors:

The following behaviors will result in a phone call to parents and removal of the youth from the activity no matter the time or place of the activity/incident. The Youth Ministry team and Parish Staff, in consultation with parents, will decide on disciplinary action that may include suspension.

- Possession, distribution, or consumption of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, cigarettes, or tobacco products.
- Vandalism or theft
- Possession of firearms, knives, or other dangerous weapons
- Harassment/abuse of others
- Any other acts which in the leader's discretion creates danger to the safety and well-being of the individual or others.

Disruptive Behaviors:

- Use of foul language or inappropriate talk, especially in ways which shows disregard for others.
- Put-downs of others; action of disrespect for others
- Disruptive actions such as not obeying directions, continuous talking, etc.

First time occurrences of disruptive behavior will be met with a warning. If misconduct continues, a private meeting with the Coordinator of Faith Formation/Youth Ministry and teen will take place, and parents will be informed. If there is no correction of behavior and misconduct becomes prolonged, then the youth will be removed from the activity, parents contacted, and a conference set-up. A Code of Conduct Contract will be mutually agreed upon. Contact is to be signed by parent/guardian and teen. If there is no cooperation, the youth will be suspended from all Middle School Youth Ministry activities.

CANCELLATION POLICY

When an event needs to be cancelled for inclement weather, lack of volunteers, or unforeseen circumstances, an e-mail will be sent to those on our list.

Middle School Youth Ministry Curriculum

St. Catherine's Parish uses a multitude of resources to provide a solid curriculum to our middle schoolers. Two of these resources are:

Chosen by Ascension Press

Chosen is a unique program, differing from traditional religion texts in appearance and approach. *Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation* is a twenty-four-lesson program that provides everything needed to prepare youth both intellectually and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to become lifelong disciples of Christ. All too often we see teens drift away from the Church after Confirmation. *Chosen* seeks to reverse this trend by winning over the hearts of teens at a critical time in their lives and keeping them firmly planted within the faith community of the Church.

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 today.

YOUTH MINISTRY ACCESS

This online resource that has a variety of different session topics based on the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry.

- Designed especially for Catholic youth ministry leaders in parishes, schools, retreat centers, camps— wherever young people gather in community as young disciples.
- For middle school youth ministry and high school youth ministry
- Based on **Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry** (USCCB, 1997)
- Provides more than 70 new gathered programs and non-gathered strategies each year.

Myths about Middle School Youth Ministry

Middle School Youth Ministry is just another name for Youth Faith Formation.

St. Catherine's Middle School Youth Ministry Sunday afternoon program is a new way in which the parish is trying to respond to the unique needs of middle schoolers. By meeting for 90 minutes on Sunday afternoon, the longer session time provides more opportunities to learn in hands-on ways and engage the youth in faith experiences. Sessions are designed to be more interactive, more engaging, and demand more (and appropriate) participation by the middle schoolers. The goal of Middle School Youth Ministry Sunday is to transition middle schoolers from Children's Faith Formation classes into a broader experience of prayer, community building, faith learning, and service through discussion, personal sharing, faith experiences, and activity-based learning.

Once my child has received his/her Confirmation, they can stop coming to Middle School Youth Ministry.

In the same way that your seventh or eighth grader is not even close to being done with their academic education, they are also not done with their faith education. Who among us is ever done learning? Middle School Youth Ministry is important to help our young people know and understand the Catholic faith, but also to help them integrate their faith into their everyday decisions about friendships and dating, career choices, moral decisions, etc. They also need to continue to experience different forms of prayer, be challenged in thinking through moral decisions, and brought to a greater understanding of what it means to live and act as a Christian in the world today. Although participation in Middle School Youth Ministry is a requirement of Confirmation preparation, Confirmation is not graduation from Middle School Youth Ministry.

Middle School Youth Ministry is only focused on the Sunday evening program.

Our Sunday afternoon program is at the heart of our ministry to middle schoolers, but it is not the only part of our ministry. We will have service activities outside of class time, opportunities for youth to serve the parish in liturgical ministries, as volunteers for parish-wide programs, as leaders/helpers at children's events, etc. We bring middle schoolers to the Just5Days program (5-day service program), and continue to provide social activities and other extended events to help them develop as Christian leaders.

Confirmation

When a youth received the Sacrament of Confirmation, they have been endowed with “special strength” to speak the Gospel and bear witness for Christ in the world. This sacrament brings to fullness that life in the Holy Spirit into which God’s sons and daughters were first initiated at Baptism.

REQUIREMENTS

- Candidates must be baptized and can receive *no earlier than 8th grade*.
- Prior to receiving Confirmation, the candidate must participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Preparation for Confirmation is a two-year process starting their 7th grade year, with the candidate receiving in the spring of their 8th grade year.
- Required attendance at the retreats during the candidate’s 7th and 8th grade year.
- Participate in service opportunities.
- Be a registered member of the parish.
- Candidates must attend the required sessions instituted by the diocese.
- Candidates should be regularly attending Middle School Youth Ministry (approximately 75% of sessions during the school year).
- Candidates must regularly attend Mass (approximately 75% of the weekends)
- Express a desire to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.

PROGRAM

Our Confirmation program is integrated into Middle School Youth Ministry. Regardless of whether your child has or has not received this sacrament, all youth will work through the broad topics assigned by the Diocese.