

The Catholic Community of St. Charles Borromeo



# **GIFT Handbook**

*2020-2021*

St. Charles Borromeo  
Mass Schedule

Saturday: 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday: 8:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m.

Children's Liturgy of the Word is offered at the 10:00 a.m. Mass

Holy Days of Obligation: *(check website or bulletin for Mass times)*

Aug. 15, 2020 —Assumption of Mary  
Nov. 1, 2020 —All Saints Day  
Dec. 8, 2020 —Immaculate Conception  
Dec. 25, 2020 —Christmas  
Jan. 1, 2021—Mary, Mother of God  
Easter Sunday - April 4, 2021  
Ascension Thursday, May 13, 2021

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# Welcome to GIFT

Welcome to Religious Formation at St. Charles Borromeo Church, a Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Metuchen. We call our religious formation program *GIFT*, which stands for Growing in Faith Together as we believe that faith formation is a life-long process.

GIFT is an intergenerational faith formation program where parents and children of all ages come together to share a light meal, pray and learn together. We use an intergenerational format because faith formation is different than academic learning. Faith formation happens in a community of believers and it is passed from one to another. For children, exposure to a wide range of people of faith is ideal for growing in their own faith. Our hope is that at each GIFT session, everyone present, children and adults, will share faith so that all children can benefit. Intergenerational faith formation can be a very powerful experience, but it does take everyone's participation.

Our theme for GIFT this year is *God Calls (in the Old Testament)*. During this year we learn about how God called people from Abraham to David, to us.

Throughout the year, we invite you to visit our website often ([www.borromeogift.org](http://www.borromeogift.org)) and be sure to read the monthly newsletter that is emailed to all registered GIFT families. These resources have the latest information to help you prepare for the GIFT sessions, information about our Sacramental Preparation programs and many Catholic resources to help you and your family on our faith journey.

# GIFT Requirements

Each month families are required to attend Mass, including the live streamed or recorded Mass during this pandemic, and complete all assignments. Please note that we may have in person or virtual GIFT sessions this year, but all sessions will be provided to families to do at home. Therefore, no session should be missed. Sessions are shorter this year so that the requirement will not be burdensome.

Children in sacramental preparation have additional requirements as outlined in this book.

## GIFT Schedule

The GIFT schedule is available online at [www.borromeogift.org](http://www.borromeogift.org) under GIFT Schedule. Please note that we have a weekly format. This should make it easier for families to commit to religious formation each week. Your family should choose a day and stick to that day for the year. Make a family commitment to your child's faith formation. Roughly twice per month the sessions will be online through either Zoom or a recording, and twice per month there will be home sessions. There will be an assignment to complete each week which will count as your attendance. Children who miss more than 2 assignments will not progress to the next level. Please note that children preparing for Confirmation must be in religious formation continuously after the Sacrament of First Eucharist. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

Please note that children in grades 1-6 participate in GIFT 1-6, while those in Confirmation preparation participate in GIFT 7/8. Both are family formation models and parents are the main catechists. No worries, you will be guided and completely supported!

# First Reconciliation

Children who have completed at least one year of religious formation may prepare for Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates God's unconditional love for us and reminds us that we are all called to receive God's merciful forgiveness. Celebrating this sacrament should give us the hope and the courage to turn away from our mistakes and our failures to love and to start again.

## Basic Concepts of Reconciliation

1. God loves us no matter what we have done.
2. All of us do things that somehow hurt others.
3. When we hurt other people we turn away from God.
4. God is always waiting for us to turn away from things that are not good by turning to God.
5. It is through Jesus that we know of the Father's love.

**In order to be prepared for the sacraments, children cannot miss any sessions or retreats.**

## First Eucharist

Through the Eucharist, we are called to the Table of the Lord. The Eucharist, the source and summit of the life of every Catholic, is the great gift of God's true loving Presence. Eucharist is the essence of our life as disciples: a life of communion with God and of solidarity with one another. There are two parts to readiness for participation in the Eucharist:

1. Your child must know that this bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ - that Jesus is truly present.
2. Your child must have sufficient preparation to allow for reception of the Eucharist with appropriate devotion and reverence.

It is important for your child to know and understand that since the Church is God's home it requires a respectful attitude at all times. Some basic concepts to review with your children include the following:

- It is appropriate to bow toward the altar when entering or leaving our pew to show respect for God.
- All must listen attentively to God's Word being proclaimed during the celebration of the Mass.
- We all must actively participate in the celebration of the Mass by saying the prayers and singing.
- We must approach and leave the altar with a prayerful, respectful attitude.
- It is inappropriate to leave Mass to go to the bathroom unless absolutely necessary.
- The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in our chapel. It is appropriate to genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament when entering or leaving the chapel.

Preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist will begin in January. Preparation will include 4 sessions and a retreat for First Reconciliation. After the celebration of First Penance, we will then have 4 preparation sessions and a retreat for First Eucharist. Sessions typically take place on Sunday mornings following the 10am Mass.

## Confirmation (GIFT 7/8)

Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are called to Confirmation, together with Baptism and Eucharist, constitute a process by which the Spirit brings the believer to full union with the community. Youth who are at least in grade 7 **and** have been attending Religious Formation may begin preparation for Confirmation. Families should understand that preparation for Confirmation is a commitment that should be considered a priority. If a family cannot commit to the required sessions, the child should wait until a later date to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is in the child's best interest to be fully present to the preparation or to wait until a later, more convenient time to celebrate the sacrament.

Youth in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders participate in weekly sessions, similar to the GIFT 1-6 families. Some will be in person or virtual and some are home assignments. These are not complicated and it is expected that anyone who wishes to be Confirmed will complete all assigned tasks.

We work in collaboration with the Center for FaithJustice to provide a hands-on Confirmation preparation experience. During the summer, each candidate attends a week long program of formation and service (ServiceworX) specially developed for confirmation preparation. Each day consists of service at various service sites selected and approved by the Center for FaithJustice and the Religious Formation office and confirmation preparation. The program runs from Sunday evening to Friday.

The schedule for Confirmation preparation (GIFT 7/8) is available at [www.borromeogift.org](http://www.borromeogift.org) under the GIFT schedule.

## **RCL Benziger Family Life**

As a way to support the Church's teachings on family life education, we are pleased to present the RCL Benziger Family Life program to all youth in our GIFT program.

RCL Benziger Family Life helps to foster personal growth, Catholic moral development, and respect for life. Centering on five themes of God's gifts – family, self, life, love and community – the program at each grade level helps families to see, internalize and act upon values for Catholic family living.

Each child in GIFT will receive an age-appropriate book that is to be completed at home with a parent.

Should you choose not to participate in this program, you will have an opportunity to complete a Parent Consent Form at the first GIFT session.

More information will be at the October GIFT session.

# Prayers and Concepts Children Should Know

## Teaching Your Child to Pray

It is important for every child to learn how to pray. Children mainly learn to pray by watching and copying their parents, siblings, relatives, others in church and elsewhere.

### 1. There is no wrong way to pray

The focus isn't so much “saying our prayers” as it is “talking with Jesus.” So beyond memorizing prayers, let your child know that they can speak to Jesus as a friend. Let them know that they can tell him anything: silly things that happened that day, things they are scared of, what they hope for, people they are worried about, etc. Invite your child to pray with you, but let them know he or she can pray whenever they want to by themselves - in bed at night, after they wake up in the morning, while they are walking to or from school alone, or riding to soccer practice, etc.

### 2. Don't ask your child to do something which you aren't doing yourself

Occasionally mentioning something you have prayed for is a great way to witness to your child. For example, when they have finished telling you about something good that happened to them at school you might be able to say “Wonderful! I prayed last night that you would have a good school day today!” If you know they are worried or scared about something, you can offer to pray for them or with them about it. Saying something as simple as “Jesus, help Jane to be brave at the dentist tomorrow even though she is scared about getting her tooth pulled out” can be consoling for her.

### 3. Regular household prayer is a great model

Try praying before meals, in times of crisis, at bedtime, in the car, with the Bible, or after a good thing happens. Let them see that praying can be natural and informal – it doesn't have to be intimidating and they don't have to worry about doing it “the right way.” Jesus knows the good intentions in our heart and hears us regardless of how sophisticated our words are.

*(Prayers can be found online at <http://www.loyolapress.com/traditional-catholic-prayers.htm>)*

### **By First Level of Faith Formation (usually Grade 1)**

It is important that parents begin teaching children how to pray as early as possible – even before they know how to talk! This will insure that prayer becomes a regular part of life. A wonderful practice for parents to help children learn how to pray is to pray together each night before bed. By praying together each night, children will know their prayers and develop a lasting relationship with our loving Father. Young children should know:

- The Sign of the Cross
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Hail Mary
- Glory to the Father

### **By Second Level of Faith Formation**

In addition to the prayers above, children preparing for the Sacraments should know all of the above and:

- The Act of Contrition
- How to say grace before and after meals

### **By Third Grade**

By third grade, children will be very familiar with all of the above and:

- Parts of the Mass
- Parish Reconciliation Services at least once per year
- Prayer in their own words, especially prayers of petitions for the needs of others.

## **By Fourth Grade**

By fourth grade, it is important that children know the basic prayers above and be familiar with the basics of our Catholic faith including:

- The Nicene Creed (a simple way to do this is to attend Mass each week)
- The Ten Commandments
- The Beatitudes
- The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

## **By Fifth and Sixth Grade**

In addition to all of the above prayers and Catholic basics, children in fifth and sixth grade should know:

- Seven Sacraments
- Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

# Policies

## Registration and Fees

Because we believe that formation is life-long process and not another activity, we do not have fees for religious formation (except for the Confirmation and First Eucharist fees.) Instead, we ask that families who are served by GIFT commit to donating at least \$750 per year through the weekly collection. This is a contribution not only to religious formation, but also to the Community of St. Charles Borromeo. Because there are many additional expenses for sacramental preparation, there are separate fees for First Eucharist preparation and Confirmation preparation. For those in second year of First Eucharist preparation the fee is \$200. For those in Confirmation preparation, there is an additional fee for Summer Serviceworx.

## Commitment

Registering in our community's Religious Formation programs demonstrates that you have made the religious formation of your family a priority over the many activities that are available to families in our area. Your commitment to the religious formation of your child is also evidenced by your regular attendance at Mass and participation in the St. Charles Borromeo community and your commitment to GIFT and Sacramental Preparation sessions and assignments.

## Attendance

Attendance at all GIFT sessions and Sacramental Preparation sessions is essential to a solid faith formation background for all of our youth. For in person sessions, all **Youth must always be accompanied by a parent.** All home assignments are meant to be done with parents. There are no exceptions to this policy.

## Discipline

Mutual cooperation and respect for all at any gathering is essential for effective learning. It is important to remember that we are communicating Christian values to our children. Parents should remind children that proper behavior is expected during all session especially when we are divided by age groups. Children should always be accompanied to the restrooms and should be reminded to use the restroom before the session so that valuable time is not wasted.

For online meetings, all children **MUST** be accompanied by a parent. All must be appropriately dressed and must be in a public place in your home (not on a bed). Zoom meetings will not be recorded but a recorded webinar or some other platform will be provided if you must miss the live session.

## Child Protection Policy

- Children cannot be left unattended at any time.
- No adult is ever to be alone with any child other than his or her own child.

## **Special Needs**

If a child has special needs, parents/guardians are asked to share that information with us so that we can work together to meet the needs of the child.

## **Crisis Management Plans and Drills**

For the safety of our families, The Catholic Community of St. Charles Borromeo has in place policies for lockdown, evacuation and fire drills. More information at our first GIFT session.

## **Food Allergies**

A light meal is served at most GIFT events. Parents can always call the week before GIFT to find out what the meal will be and who will supply it. In addition, those with allergies are always welcome to bring their own food from home.

## **Illegal Substances and Weapons**

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and weapons of any kind are not allowed on parish premises at any time. If anyone is found in possession, the person will be detained until proper authorities are notified.

## **Weather and Other Emergencies**

If GIFT or a Sacramental preparation program is cancelled, there will be a message on the St. Charles Borromeo answering machine and a message posted on the St. Charles Borromeo web page. Please see [www.borromeo.org](http://www.borromeo.org).

## GIFT Consent Form

I have read the GIFT Handbook and I understand all of the information stated in it.

I agree to follow all policies stated in the handbook and understand my responsibilities as a GIFT parent.

Parent/Legal Guardian

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

