

St. Gertrude Parish



Religious Education Handbook 2023-2024

All are welcome!

Dear parents and legal guardians,

On behalf of the St. Gertrude's Staff and community, I want to welcome you to our Religious Education Program.

The Religious Education Program's team believes it is everyone's responsibility to empower our children and youth with the decision-making skills, based on our Catholic faith, to become socially and emotionally successful and responsible people. With that in mind, you and your family are invited to be active participants in our Church.

Please read the Religious Education handbook. You will find details of both First Communion and Confirmation programs. Our primary method of communication with you will be via email so please, check your spam folder so you do not miss any updates of our program.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to work with your child and family.

Sincerely,

Eloy Escamilla MDiv/MA

Pastoral Associate

St. Gertrude Church

This handbook has been written primarily for those students not attending Northside Catholic Academy (NCA). However, all First Communion and Confirmation requirements apply to NCA students and all other students who might request such sacraments.

St. Gertrude's Religious Education program is for children in grades 1 through 8. It provides Catholic Religious Education to support parents, the first teachers of their children's way of faith. Parents are called to serve as role models of inspiration for their children through their own prayer life, Education in faith and in support of St. Gertrude Church. Our parish family, through volunteer catechists, as well as our staff and pastor, work as a team with the parents so that together we can provide our children with a sound program to help them become disciples of Jesus Christ. We ask you as a parent to:

- A. Show to your children the way to God by your example. It is expected that all children enrolled in our program and their families participate in Mass every week.
- B. Pray with your child and teach them how to pray.
- C. Encourage your child to discuss his/her thoughts on Religious Education lessons with you.

Religious Education Staff

Each class is staffed by a catechist. Our catechists are volunteers who generously share our Catholic faith and tradition with our students. Most are not teachers by profession. However, all have a willingness to share their faith to help our children grow in the love of Jesus. All our catechists are required to:

- Be in good standing with the Catholic Church.
- Attend catechetical meetings.
- Comply with the Diocesan requirements which include a criminal background check, VIRTUS's Protecting God's Children training, mandated reporter training from the State of Illinois, and Archdiocesan Standards of Behavior for Church Personnel Working with Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
- All catechists are encouraged to seek certification through the Archdiocese of Chicago.

According to the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Chicago there are six tasks of catechesis:

- 1. Promote knowledge of the faith** – Teach the “basics” of the faith as revealed in the signs of creation, Sacred Scripture, Catholic tradition, and human experience.
- 2. Liturgical Education** – Teach about the form and meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments and help individuals prepare their minds and hearts to enter into these mysteries of our faith.
- 3. Moral Formation** – Teach the moral teachings of the Church, which are the fulfillment of the Commandments.

4. **Teaching to Pray** – Teach that a “climate of prayer” and participation in prayer invites individuals into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. **Education for Community Life** – Teach that the human person needs to live in society. Society is not optional, but a requirement of human nature.
6. **Missionary Initiative** – Teach that all Christian service is an expression of love and is performed by Christians for the purpose of building up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Transferring from other Religious Ed Programs

Students who are transferring into our program from another parish should obtain a transfer letter from their former parish indicating that the child has successfully completed one year (minimum) of Religious Education.

Classroom Behavior

We require that all students behave in an appropriate manner to create a productive learning environment. Disrespect towards catechists, fighting, using foul language, defacement of church property, carrying harmful objects, and stealing are considered unacceptable behaviors. Additionally, we have a zero-tolerance policy on bullying. To provide an environment that promotes maximum learning, good discipline in the classroom is a necessity. Though catechists have skills that help promote an orderly and structured atmosphere, discipline problems may still arise. It is the practice of the Religious Education program to attempt to solve them using a Christian Reconciliation Model.

Registrations & Non-Discrimination Policy

All new and returning students will need to register each year for Religious Education. Northside Catholic Academy students are automatically enrolled in the First Communion and Confirmation program once they start 1st grade and 7th grade respectively. It is the parent’s responsibility to notify our office of any changes to the information provided during registration.

If the child is making First Communion and Reconciliation or Confirmation during the current school year, a sacramental registration form needs to be filled out. Please, note that students must receive at least two years of preparation to make these sacraments.

Our program admits students of any sex, race, color or nationality, and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students in our parish.

Textbooks

Our textbook series for grades 1 through 8 is entitled, “Alive in Christ” published by Our Sunday Visitor. A student textbook is included in the tuition fee; if lost or misplaced, please ask the teacher for an extra one or order one via <https://osv.com>.

Arrival/Dismissal

When you are dropping off or picking up your children, please pull into a parking space. This is an act of courtesy to others, and it will alleviate the traffic jams that tend to occur at arrival and dismissal times.

The main door opens five minutes before the start of class. If a catechist is not present at the time that the class begins, students are asked to wait in the hallway in an orderly and quiet manner. Children are not to enter an unattended classroom for any reason.

Religious Education Fees for 2023-2024

This school year, fees are \$210.00 dollars for one child and an additional \$30.00 dollars for each student from the same family. An additional sacramental fee of \$65.00 dollars is required for children making their First Communion and Reconciliation or their Confirmation.

Religious Education class fees and sacramental fees can be paid online at [St. Gertrude Religious Education Tuition 2023-2024 \(givecentral.org\)](https://givecentral.org) Sacramental fees can be paid online at [Sacramental Fee \(givecentral.org\)](https://givecentral.org)

Parents for whom tuition would cause a severe financial burden should contact the director to set up a payment plan. No child will be refused admission to the Religious Education Program because of inability to pay tuition.

Building Security

To provide a safe environment for the children, we do have a surveillance system outside of the building only. The building will be locked when classes are in session. Parents are not allowed to enter the building without authorization.

Class Cancellations

If for any reason, especially during wintertime, classes need to be cancelled, you will be notified via e-mail.

Special Notices

At times, special notices are issued for making announcements or changing procedures. We ask you to please check your email (remember to check your spam folder) or read the weekly Religious Ed Newsletter posted at <https://stgertrudechicago.org/religious-education-news> to keep you updated.

Class Schedule

First Communion and Religious Education classes for 1st through 6th grades are held at Northside Catholic Academy on Sundays from 9:15-10:15 am. Confirmation Sessions are held at the Ministry Center with the same schedule. Please be on time!

Class Attendance

Religious Education should be a priority, especially for a First Communion or Confirmation candidate. Given the amount of time in the Religious Education teaching schedule, attendance at all classes is essential for all students.

Communication is important. We understand that sometimes children get sick or get overwhelmed with school, parents need to work overtime, etc. Please send an email to eescamilla@stgertrudechicago.org and let us know that your child will be missing class. If a child misses more than five classes or is frequently tardy, they might need to repeat the year.

Calendar

A calendar with class schedules and important dates will be posted in our website. The calendar will always be available and updated if changes need to be made.

Portable Electronic Devices

Cell phones and other electronic devices are NOT to be used during class time. They are a distraction to the learning process.

Dress Code

We ask that children dress appropriately for Religious Education classes as well as for Mass.

Medication

We will NOT administer prescription or non-prescription medication to any child. Parents are asked to administer any medication before or after any class and to make the catechist aware of any possible side effects. Parents are permitted to enter the building and administer the medication to their children with previous authorization.

First Communion Requirements 2023-24

Any student who wishes to receive the Sacrament of Communion in St. Gertrude Church must:

- Have received the Sacrament of Baptism and Reconciliation.
A copy of the baptismal certificate is needed if the child was not baptized at St. Gertrude Church.
- Have completed at least two years of preparation for the reception of the sacrament. Northside Catholic Academy students are automatically enrolled in the sacramental program once they start 1st grade or once they get enrolled to NCA.
- Have regular participation at Mass. Sunday Mass is an important part of building the child's faith, especially during the preparation period for receiving Holy Communion. The presence of children while worshiping God will remind us of Jesus' humbleness and joy! You are more than welcome to participate in any Mass on Sunday or the Saturday Vigil Mass. The Mass schedule at St. Gertrude is:
 - Saturday Vigil Masses - 5:00 pm
 - Sunday Masses - 8:00 and 10:30 am
 - Gym Masses – Sundays at 10:30 am (Sept -Jun)

Parents of children engaged in pre-sacramental preparation (2nd year preparation for First Communion) must:

- Fill out and submit the Sacramental Registration Form. Please, visit our website to get the form. www.stgertrudechicago.org

Recommendations:

- The attire for First Communion is simple and age appropriate.
- The attire should not distract from the focus of receiving the Sacrament. Dress code is going to be given in due time during a parent meeting.
- To keep the solemnity of the First Communion Mass, photos are not allowed before and/or anytime during Mass.

Sacrament of Confirmation Requirements 2023-24

Any student who wishes to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in St. Gertrude's Church must:

- Have received the Sacrament of Baptism, Reconciliation, and First Communion. (At the time of registration, a copy of the Baptismal certificate is needed if the child was not baptized at St. Gertrude Church.)
- Have completed at least two years of preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

First Year Preparation:

Confirmation candidates in year one are typically in 7th grade. Those in their first year of preparing for their Confirmation must:

- Have successfully completed Religious Education sessions while in 7th grade or any other time after 7th grade. Northside Catholic Academy students are automatically enrolled in the sacramental program once they start 7th grade.
- Have completed service hours.
 - Candidates should talk to their parents about choosing ways to serve.
 - Candidates must complete their service hours in one of each of the three areas presented below. A service log for each project needs to be completed. Visit our website to get the form.
 - The Service Logs for those in their first year of preparing for confirmation are due on April 26th, 2024.

These are the three areas in which the candidate must cover:

Family life:

These are things that the candidate might do to help his/her family:

- Taking an extra household chore.
- Helping a sibling, friend, neighbor, or a schoolmate with his/her homework.
- Monitoring the recycling system at home.
- Organizing a family fun night.
- Cleaning the house.

Community life:

These are things that the candidate might help to create a better community.

- Finding a social justice issue and create a project/presentation on that for his/her class.
- Collecting aluminum cans and donate the money to charity.
- Making get well cards for children in hospitals.
- Volunteering for service in a soup kitchen, food pantry, etc.

Parish life:

- These are things that the candidate might do to help St. Gertrude's parish community. The candidate must fill out the Ministry Service Registration Form.
 - The form must be submitted no later than Sunday, September 10, 2023. Ministry placement is based on a first-come, first-served basis. Ministry placement will be communicated to the candidate's parents.
- Have regular participation at Mass. Sunday Mass is an important part of building faith, especially during the preparation period for receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The presence of your family will bring joy to the whole community. You are always welcome to participate in any Mass on Sunday or the Saturday Vigil Mass. The Mass schedule at St. Gertrude is:
 - Saturday Vigil Masses - 5:00 pm
 - Sunday Masses - 8:00 and 10:30 am
 - Gym Masses – Sundays at 10:30 am (Sept -Jun)

Second Year Preparation:

Any student who wishes to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in St. Gertrude's Church must:

- Have received the Sacrament of Baptism, Reconciliation, and First Communion. At the time of registration, a copy of the Baptismal certificate is needed if the child was not baptized at St. Gertrude Church.
- Have completed at least two years of preparation for the reception of the sacrament. Northside Catholic Academy students are automatically enrolled in the sacramental program once they start 7th grade.

Confirmation candidates are typically in 8th grade. Those in their second year of preparing for their Confirmation must:

- Have successfully completed Religious Education sessions while in 8th grade or any other time after 8th grade.
- Have completed service hours.
 - Candidates should talk to their parents about choosing ways to serve.
 - Candidates must complete their service hours in one of each of the three areas presented below. A service log for each project needs to be completed.
 - The Service Logs for those in their second year of preparing for their confirmation are due on April 26th, 2024.

- These are the three areas in which the candidate must cover:

Family life:

These are things that the candidate might do to help his/her family:

- Taking an extra household chore.
- Helping a sibling, friend, neighbor, or a schoolmate with his/her homework.
- Monitoring the recycling system at home.
- Organizing a family fun night.
- Cleaning the house.

Community life:

These are things that the candidate might help to create a better community.

- Finding a social justice issue and create a project/presentation on that for his/her class.
- Collecting aluminum cans and donate the money to charity.
- Making get well cards for children in hospitals.
- Volunteering for service in a soup kitchen, food pantry, etc.

Parish life:

These are things that the candidate might do to help St. Gertrude's parish community.

- The candidate must fill out the Ministry Service Registration Form on time.
- The form must be submitted no later than Sunday, September 10, 2023. Ministry placement is based on a first-come, first-served basis. Ministry placement will be communicated to the candidate's parents.

- Have regular participation at Mass. Sunday Mass is an important part of building your faith especially during the preparation period for receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The presence of your family will bring joy to the whole community. You are always welcome to participate in any Mass on Sunday or the Saturday Vigil Mass. The Mass schedule at St. Gertrude is:

- Saturday Vigil Masses - 5:00 pm
- Sunday Masses - 8:00 and 10:30 am
- Gym Masses – Sundays at 10:30 am (Sept -Jun)

- Have attended the required Confirmation retreats. The first retreat for those to be confirmed in 2024 will be held at the Social Hall on Saturday, February 24, 2024, from 9:00 am to noon. The second will be on April 25th at 6 pm. More information about these retreats will be shared in due time. *Please note that if the student is not able to attend the first retreat, the student must complete his/her retreat in another parish. A letter of completion must be submitted before the Confirmation date.*

- Have participated in the Essay Contest.
 - **Assignment Topic:** *TBA*
 - The essay should be 500–600 words. Spelling and grammar count.
 - Essays should be sent to eescamilla@stgertrudechicago.org or mailed to: St. Gertrude Church / Religious Education, 1420 W. Granville Ave, Chicago, IL 60660

Deadline: Entries must be submitted online or postmarked by Monday, December 18, 2023. The three best essays will receive a gift card and will appear on our website.

- Be accompanied by one sponsor on the day of Confirmation. The sponsor should meet the following qualifications: A Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation; at least 18 years of age; and must not be the Candidate's father or mother.
- Complete the following Confirmation forms:
 - Confirmation package – due on Sunday, February 12, 2024. The package has the following forms:
 - Saint's name project
 - Letter to the Pastor requesting the Sacrament of Confirmation
 - Sacramental Request Form for Confirmation Candidates
 - All forms can be found on our website.

Recommendations for Confirmation candidates:

- The attire for Confirmation should not distract from the focus of receiving the Sacrament.
- The dress code will be posted on our website.
- To keep the solemnity of the Confirmation Mass, photos are not allowed before and/or anytime during Mass.

Family Resources

This is a selection of background information, prayers, and other material that supports the topics we will be covering.

The Trinity

God Our Father: Jesus taught us to call God “Father,” because of the loving care that his Father has for everyone and everything. Jesus told us to tell God our Father our needs in prayer, and that God would always be listening.

Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is the Father’s greatest gift to us. Jesus Christ is God’s Son. Jesus has a divine nature and a human nature. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. God’s Son becoming man is called Incarnation. Jesus gathered his followers into a group called disciples who became the Church after he ascended to his Father in Heaven. He taught his disciples how we are to live as Christians. Jesus suffered and died on a cross and rose from the dead to free us from sin.

The Holy Spirit: Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide his church until the end of time. The Holy Spirit fills the Church with strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit comes to us in baptism and other sacraments to help fill us with God’s life and lead us to be true followers of Jesus.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer/Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Glory Be to the Father

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed are you among woman and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

An Examination of Conscience for Children Using the 10 Commandments

The basic requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God with your whole heart, like the prodigal son (in Luke 15), and to acknowledge your sins with true sorrow before the priest, who is there to remind you of Christ. If you examine your conscience to uncover and reflect on your sins, you can then bring those uncovered sins before God in the Sacrament of Confession and ask for forgiveness.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- *Have I wanted more things, making things or money more important than God?*

- *Have I made an idol of sports or entertainment figures?*
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
 - *Do I use God's name carelessly?*
 - *Do I use God's name in anger?*
 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
 - *Did I attend Mass on Sunday?*
 - *Did my behavior make it difficult or impossible for my parents to get to church on time?*
 - *Have I remembered to pray daily?*
 4. Honor your father and your mother.
 - *Do I obey my parents?*
 - *Have I done my chores without complaining?*
 - *Do I do my chores without being reminded?*
 - *Have I been disrespectful to teachers, coaches, or others in authority?*
 5. You shall not kill.
 - *Do I keep my patience, or do I lose my temper?*
 - *Do I hold grudges and try to get even with others?*
 - *Have I been unfair to others, especially those who are different than I am?*
 6. You shall not commit adultery.
 - *Do I show respect for my body?*
 - *Do I respect the bodies of others?*
 - *Do I avoid harmful things like drugs, tobacco, and alcohol?*
 7. You shall not steal.
 - *Have I taken something that belongs to someone else?*
 - *Have I "forgotten" to return something that I borrowed?*
 - *Have I used money responsibly?*
 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - *Do I play fairly, or do I ever cheat at school or games?*
 - *Have I been honest, or have I lied?*
 - *Have I hurt someone by what I have said or done?*
 - *Have I copied someone else's homework?*
 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
 - *Have I been jealous of the friends that someone else has?*
 - *Have I tried to be kind to others?*
 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.
 - *Have I been jealous of the things that my friends have?*
 - *Have I nagged my parents into buying things because my friends have them?*
 - *Have I helped others when they needed help?*

Taken from Seven Frequently Asked Questions About Children and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, written for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee by Kathleen D. Beuscher, 2010

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Apostles Creed

I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended into hell;
on the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

The Seven Sacraments

Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism
Eucharist
Confirmation

Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation
Anointing of
the sick

Sacraments of Service

Marriage
Holy Orders

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom

Wisdom helps us make right decisions and guides us from doing wrong.

Wisdom is a gift people build up through experience. A wise person knows what to do in many situations. A wise believer sees the people and events of human history fitting together in the large plan of God's love.

Understanding

Understanding helps us discover what the stories in the bible, especially Jesus' instructions, have to teach us. Understanding is the gift of thinking and reflecting on experience. People with understanding think things through for themselves and act on their insights.

Right Judgement

This gift helps us to lead others in knowing what is right and wrong and how to be courageous in doing what is right. Right Judgment is willingness to consider the insights and understanding of others about a situation and to work together towards a solution.

Knowledge

The gift of knowledge helps us to know Jesus as our friend. The gift of knowledge helps us to comprehend what is needed to serve God. The gift of knowledge helps us seek out the facts and information necessary to make wise and fair decisions.

Courage

This gift helps us to love God and others and to do what God wants us to do, even when we are afraid. Courage is strength to do what isn't always easy. Courage is to stand up for the unpopular. Courage is to speak the truth. Courage is to put oneself on the line for what is right.

Reverence

Reverence helps us to show our love for God, for God's people and God's earth in our words and actions. Reverence is the gift of honoring God and others. The pious person reveres and worships God. The pious person has reverence for all people with the respect he wants for himself.

Wonder & Awe

The gift of wonder and awe helps us put God in everything we say and do. It helps us show respect for God's holy name. It helps us respect all of creation. Fear of the Lord is the gift of wonder and awe at God's presence in creation and in us.

Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his/her spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently.

The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms (money) to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity (brotherly love); it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy seek to help alleviate human misery – material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness, and death. Everyone is obliged to perform the works of mercy, according to his own ability and the need of his/her neighbor. It is important to remember that ordinary deeds done every day to relieve the corporal or spiritual needs of others are true works of mercy, if done in the name of Christ. Taking care of children, teaching children and adults about the faith, caring for elderly parents or a sick child or spouse are some examples.