

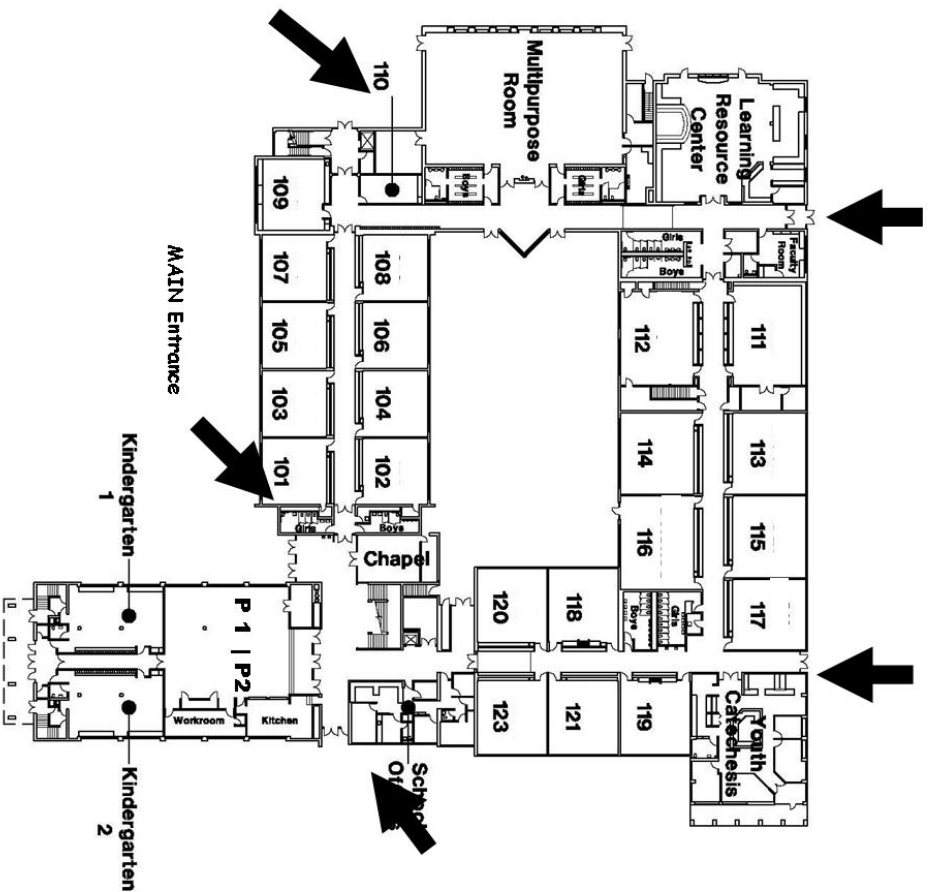
# YOUTH CATECHESIS “YC” Family Handbook 2011 ~ 2012

St. John of the Cross Parish  
708 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Western Springs, IL 60558  
www.stjohnofthecross.org • yc@sjcross.org • 708-246-6760

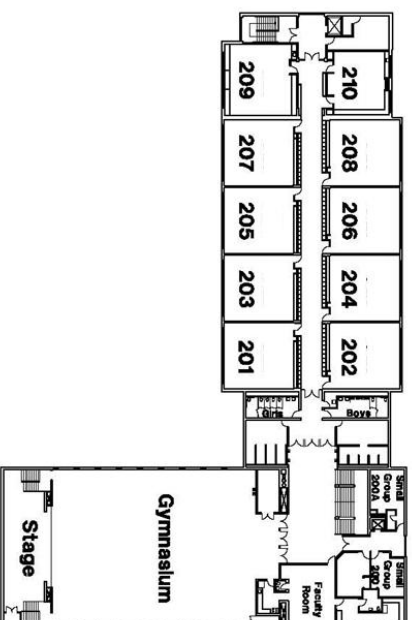


**Rev. David P. Dowdle, Pastor**  
Rev. Joseph F. McDonnell, Pastor Emeritus  
Rev. Darrio Boscutti, Associate Pastor  
Rev. Filbert Ngwila, Associate Pastor

**Janet Olivieri Caschetta**  
Director of Youth Catechesis  
jcaschetta@stjohnofthecross.org • 708-246-6760, ext 256



**Important - Please Note**  
 Five (5) entrances indicated by the arrows will be unlocked for drop off and pick up—they will be LOCKED during class time.  
 During class time, visitors may only enter through the main door of the school



**First Floor**

**Second Floor**

# St. John of the Cross

Fall 2011

Dear Parents,

*As summer winds down, we are thrilled to welcome your children back to YC!*

*We will continue to explore our theme of "Finding JC in YC" for the 2011-2012 year. We will discover how we find Jesus Christ's love in listening, responding, serving, sharing, singing and welcoming. This year we will talk about the ways we see Jesus Christ in ourselves. The Youth Catechesis Office will be asking families to incorporate the theme into their family life. One way is by giving to others in service.*

*YC centers on the building of a caring, sharing and loving community for God. In the time that we have with your children in session, the Catechists do their utmost to impart Catholic doctrine and tradition as well as the values of Jesus and the vision of the Church.*

*The Catechist who will be working with your child is a volunteer. Join us as we thank all our volunteers for their dedication. They are committed to sharing the love of Jesus to all the students they minister to.*

*We need your help to reinforce what the students have learned. We ask that you **actively participate in Mass each week**, and to reinforce the Catholic fact that is experienced in class. Parents are the primary teachers of faith; we deeply appreciate you allowing us to be partners on this journey with your children.*

*We look forward to "finding JC at YC".*

*Janet Olivieri Caschetta  
Director of Youth Catechesis*

# YOUTH CATECHESIS INFORMATION

## OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Thursday 8:30 am~4:00 pm      Sunday and Monday – *open during class time*

## CLASS SESSIONS

Grades K-6	Sunday in classrooms	10:15 am – 11:30 am
Grades K-6	Monday in classrooms	6:15 pm – 7:30 pm
Grades 7 & 8	Sunday in small groups	morning or evening

## YOUTH CATECHESIS STAFF

**708 51<sup>st</sup> Street**      (*entrance on 51<sup>st</sup> & Caroline Ave*)      **708-246-6760**

Janet O. Caschetta	X 256	<a href="mailto:jcaschetta@stjohnofthecross.org">jcaschetta@stjohnofthecross.org</a>	
Director of Youth Catechesis			
Deb Pusinelli	X 251	<a href="mailto:pusinelli@sjcross.org">pusinelli@sjcross.org</a>	Grades 7 & 8
Cathy Mahoney Kieley	X 252	<a href="mailto:mahoney@sjcross.org">mahoney@sjcross.org</a>	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6
Barb Campbell	X 250	<a href="mailto:campbell@sjcross.org">campbell@sjcross.org</a>	Grades Kg, 1, 2 & SN
Liz Clawson	X 253	<a href="mailto:clawson@sjcross.org">clawson@sjcross.org</a>	Secretary
Kathy Steider	X 255	<a href="mailto:steider@sjcross.org">steider@sjcross.org</a>	Secretary
Mary Jamrozik	X 255	<a href="mailto:mary@sjcross.org">mary@sjcross.org</a>	Secretary
<b>YC general e-mail address</b>		<a href="mailto:yc@sjcross.org">yc@sjcross.org</a>	

Laurie Smillie ~ Chair, Youth Catechesis Council

## EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

The Youth Catechesis Office uses the Computerized Emergency Closing Center to relay information about class cancellation.

Any announcements necessary can be heard on the following stations:

AM Radio:                    WMAQ 670    WGN 720    WBBM 780                    WLS 890  
TV Station/website: CBS 2    NBC 5    WGN 9 Morning News    FOX 32    CLTV  
Please DO NOT call the Youth Catechesis Office or Rectory.

## DOCTRINE – EDUCATION – TEXTBOOK

The texts used in any learning environment become only one tool in the educational process. These textbooks will be kept in the classroom throughout the year at most grade levels. The series we are using for grades Kg. through 6 is the RCL Benziger series *Blest are We*; Grade 7 uses RCL Benziger *Faith First*; and Grade 8 uses Loyola Press series *Confirmed in the Spirit*.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Youth Catechesis Program at St. John of the Cross is to work in partnership with the parents towards the faith formation of our children through the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **GOALS**

The goals of the Youth Catechesis Program at St. John of the Cross are based on the six fundamental tasks of catechesis from the General Directory of Catechesis:

- ✦ Promote knowledge of the faith to our children and families by offering opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of tradition and scripture and love for Jesus.
- ✦ Educate on the liturgical life of the Church to fully prepare our children and families for full, conscious and active participation.
- ✦ Form a moral sense in all those in the faith community so that they may personalize their Catholic faith and make it a part of their daily lives.
- ✦ Provide instruction on prayer in the manner and attitude of Jesus.
- ✦ Educate for community life and nurture in our children the love of neighbor, the spirit of simplicity and mutual forgiveness.
- ✦ Develop a missionary sense in all children and families so that they will be the presence of Christ in society.

## **YOUTH CATECHESIS COUNCIL**

The role of the Youth Catechesis Council is to assess the needs of those parishioners who have their children enrolled in the elementary Youth Catechesis Program. The Council acts in an advisory capacity to the pastor and the Director of Youth Catechesis.

The Council meetings are closed except for the first fifteen minutes. This time is devoted to parents who have special needs and concerns. Those wishing to attend the Council meetings are asked to inform the Youth Catechesis Office prior to the meeting. The YCC meetings are on the first Tuesday of every month, September through May.

## **YOUTH CATECHESIS**

The life-centered approach is used on all levels of the St. John of the Cross Youth Catechesis Program, pre-school through eighth grade. Children, catechists and parents are involved in the dynamic process of relating the experiences of daily living to the insights of the Catholic tradition. Along with this life-centered approach to teach as Jesus did, the foundation of the Catholic faith is laid in prayer, scripture and doctrine.

The entire process is developed in three stages:

1. Basic life experiences are brought into focus by shared reflection.
2. A concrete faith development adapted to the needs and understanding of children at each grade level is considered.
3. A faith response, both personal and as a Christian community, is fostered.

This approach to youth catechesis follows the example of Jesus, who often used the experiences of the people as the starting point of His parables. Catechists use stories from the child's daily life to draw out the meaning of God's revelation and show its relevance for contemporary life.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Webpage: [www.stjohnofthecross.org](http://www.stjohnofthecross.org) - the YC page is listed on the menu bar. The webpage is updated with the most current information for the program. Choose the link for the "Online Calendar" for the most updated YC calendar events.

Email: Every family in the YC program that provided the office with an e-mail address will receive a monthly newsletter with information throughout the year. Families without emails will have the newsletter mailed to them.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with catechists and YC staff in person, in writing or by phone. Catechists welcome any information that will help them instruct your child(ren).

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

We encourage parents to have the child in every session the complete time. If you need to pick up your child before the end of the session, check in with the volunteer at the front office, who will then make arrangements for your child to come to you.

## PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are essential to their child's faith formation. "*The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children*" (Vatican II *The Church*, #11). With encouragement and the reinforcement of class activities in the home, the children will truly personalize their faith. It becomes part of their lives rather than only a segment of time on Sunday or Monday.

Parents enrich their own faith by participation in the faith formation of their children. Major research on youth catechesis in catholic school and in religious education programs concludes that the involvement of the parents in the religious formation of the family is the single most important factor influencing religious behavior.

Catechists supplement, in a more formal way, the education of faith, which occurs in the home. It is important for parents and catechists to support and encourage each other.

Parents of children in all grades are encouraged to support the efforts of the Youth Catechesis program in the following ways:

- ✦ Show interest each week in what is happening in class by asking questions and reviewing any handouts
- ✦ Help your child be conscientious about the homework assignments given to them
- ✦ Attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days and receive the Sacraments often
- ✦ Actively participate by helping out in the classroom, in the parking lot or school building during sessions, or assist during special events
- ✦ Make attendance at the two **Family Liturgies** a priority for your family so that the YC community can celebrate and worship together
- ✦ Work together on the **Family Faith Lesson**, right before the Thanksgiving holiday. This is a unique opportunity for parents and children to share their faith in their own home within a structured lesson
- ✦ Pay attention to your own faith life by participating in one Adult Formation event in our parish this year

## STUDENT RECORDS

Parishioners entering the program for the first time must present an official record of the child's attendance in another religious education program or a Catholic school.

Parishioners transferring to another parish may request verification of a child's attendance in the St. John of the Cross Youth Catechesis Program.

The grade level of a student entering the program will be left to the sole discretion of the Director of Youth Catechesis.

## **ATTENDANCE**

We expect our students to attend and be on time for every class.

Phone calls will be made or letters sent to parents whose child(ren) have a poor attendance record. If a child is absent for 1/3 of classes, a discussion with the coordinator will be scheduled.

For your child's safety, please be prompt when dropping off/picking up your child(ren).

## **COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

While we hope it does not happen, there may be times when you have a complaint about the way a situation is or was handled. Since administrative staff, catechists and parents are a team in education, the ideal would be to work through these situations together. We urge you to follow the recommended steps listed below:

Step 1 Contact the person directly involved with the situation. If you are not satisfied with the outcome after this conversation,

Step 2 Contact the person's immediate supervisor.

We want to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. It is very important that when you have a concern, you follow the steps outlined here. All parent's comments, suggestions and concerns are welcome. Let's work together step by step.

## **SACRAMENTS**

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are joint efforts on the part of the child, parents, catechists and community. Class times, meetings, prayer times, and celebration times are all necessary ingredients for meaningful initiation into these sacramental experiences.

Our archdiocesan guidelines stress that parents who choose to have their children prepared for sacraments are expected to be actively involved in the child's preparation through their prayer life at home, regular experience of Sunday Mass celebration, and attendance at parent meetings for each of these sacraments.

It is expected that students will faithfully attend every year (grades 1 through 8) in their religious formation. High expectations for attendance exist during each of the 2-year sacramental preparation programs. First graders need faith formation to be ready for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist in the 2nd grade. The 8th graders need 8 years of faith formation sessions, specifically the 7th grade, to be well prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in grade 8 here at St. John of the Cross.

## **REGISTRATION PROCEDURE**

All families should plan to register their children for the following year during the **Registration Fair**, in the spring. The total fee can be paid at the time of registration or in monthly installments. All tuition fees must be paid by the end of the first semester.

The tuition fee for each year is printed on the Registration Form and covers a portion of the administrative costs, books and supplies. During grades 2 and 8, there is an additional sacramental fee of \$45.00.

No child will be excluded from the program due to a genuine financial difficulty. Any family unable to pay tuition should contact the Youth Catechesis Office at 708-246-6760.

## **BEHAVIOR ON CAMPUS**

Children move within the building often during a class session. Catechists will guide children through the hallways in a quiet orderly fashion at all times to respect those children in every classroom. Youth Catechesis sessions take place in a GUM-FREE facility. Please help us enforce this; respect the property of others.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

It is important to maintain an atmosphere in which students can learn. When a student is disruptive, valuable class time is lost. Therefore, the following disciplinary procedures will be used to address the issue of the disruptive child:

- Step 1 Classroom personnel (catechist/aide) will seek to motivate the child in a positive manner to self discipline
- Step 2 Classroom personnel will speak privately with the child, agree on an action plan, record progress, and inform the Grade Level Coordinator
- Step 3 Classroom personnel will contact Grade Level Coordinator and the parent(s) will be informed
- Step 4 If necessary, the catechist, Director of Youth Catechesis or Grade Level Coordinator, and parents will have a conference about the situation

If there is no improvement, it may be necessary for the parents to take a more active role and participate with their child in the program during class times.

## **FAMILY FAITH CONNECTIONS**

This program provides formal religious education for children taught by parents in their home. Parents are provided with resource workbooks to guide them in their weekly sessions. The curriculum is lectionary-based which follows the weekly scripture readings.

Attendance is required at the Family Cluster Meetings which allows families to connect with other families in small groups. Family Faith Connections is available for grades Preschool to sixth (6<sup>th</sup>).

## **SPECIAL NEEDS CLASSROOM (SUNDAY MORNING)**

Families who have children with special needs are offered two placements for their children: inclusion at the child's appropriate grade level or the self-contained Special Needs Classroom. The Special Needs Class has a higher teacher to child ratio, is non-categorical, and uses a scripture-based curriculum with many sensory activities.

## **TRAFFIC SAFETY PLAN**

Please read through these directions very carefully. It is VERY important that you and your child pay attention to the drop-off and pick-up procedures. To protect the children we need the cooperation of all vehicle drivers. If possible, contact other families in your neighborhood and **form a carpool**.

### **SUNDAY MORNING**

**Drop off:** **STUDENTS K, 1, 2:** Use any of the parking lot entrances, park your car walk your child to the classroom.  
**STUDENTS 3, 4, 5, 6:** Students may exit cars on the building side and walk safely into the building entrance.

**Pick up:** **STUDENTS K, 1, 2:** A child will be dismissed when a family member comes into the classroom at dismissal time. Please wait until 11:30 a.m. because the youth have difficulty concentrating when they see parents.  
**STUDENTS 3, 4, 5, 6:** Students may exit the building and walk safely to their parent's car once they see the car.

### **MONDAY EVENING**

**Drop off:** **STUDENTS K, 1, 2:** Use any of the parking lot entrances, park your car walk your child to the classroom.  
**STUDENTS 3, 4, 5, 6:** Students may exit cars on the building side and walk safely into the building entrance.

**Pick up:** **STUDENTS K, 1, 2:** A child will be dismissed when a family member comes into the classroom at dismissal time. Please wait until 7:30 p.m. because the youth have difficulty concentrating when they see parents.  
**STUDENTS 3, 4, 5, 6:** Students may exit the building and walk safely to their parent's car once they see the car.