

## GIFT Policies

**NOTE: You must complete/sign a current Registration Form and turn it in to the Parish Office before your child can participate in GIFT.**

1. **Attendance** – follow the published calendar to know when classes are scheduled. Consistent attendance is crucial to the development of our spiritual lives and our understanding of the Catholic faith. GIFT classes meet for only one hour, so punctuality is important in order to make the most of our time; it is also a courtesy to the catechists and other students. Students are expected to attend every class unless they are ill or there is a family emergency. **Note that parish policy is that 6 absences necessitates repeating that year of GIFT.** If you must miss a class, you can obtain make-up lessons from your child's catechist. This work must be turned in at the next class in order for the absence to be excused. Attendance is taken each week and counts toward the reception of attendance awards at the end of the year. Note that Family GIFT Days are an integral part of the curriculum, not "optional extras," and attendance is taken at them as well.

2. **Preparations for celebrating sacraments** – it is the policy of Holy Trinity that students be enrolled and participating in GIFT one year prior to entering a sacramental preparation year. This ensures a solid foundation of understanding on which to build sacramental preparation.

3. **Drop off and dismissal** – children may be dropped off and enter the building at the side entrance near the cafeteria: *the Eagle Entrance/Exit*. Parents must come into the building and to the classroom door to pick up students in grades 1-5 when class is dismissed at 10:45 A.M. Students will not be allowed to leave the classroom unless accompanied by an adult; older siblings do not qualify as an adult. With a signed parental permission form, students in grades 6-8 are able to meet parents in the gathering space or the parking lot at the end of class. Parents are welcome to stay during class time.

4. **Safety measures** – a background check and attendance at the Archdiocesan Safe Environment training are required of every catechist. Students are welcome to bring friends to GIFT, but we must have contact information for the friend's parents, as well as information about the friend's health (allergies, etc.) Please stop by the Resource Room to provide us with this information when you bring a visitor. An Abuse Prevention curriculum is now a mandated annual part of our GIFT curriculum. Parents will have the opportunity to preview materials that will be shown to students and to opt-out if they so choose. This aspect of our curriculum is completed in the early weeks of the GIFT program.

5. **Discipline** – one of the tenets of our Catholic faith is that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and is deserving of respect. Our catechists are volunteers who sacrifice their time and energy to lead classes; they deserve our gratitude and our cooperation. Equally, every child has the right to learn without being disrupted and distracted. Nevertheless, there are occasions when problem behaviors arise. Here is how they will be handled:

- On a first offense, the catechist will give a verbal warning to the offending student. Students are expected to apologize to the catechist.
- A second offense will result in the catechist notifying parents and the Director of Religious Education. Parents are asked to speak to their child about correcting the problematic behavior.
- Any third offense will result in the student being sent to the Director of Religious Education for a conference with the parent(s). They will only be accepted back into class with a parent accompanying them and sitting with them throughout the class.

Persistent problems will necessitate removal from GIFT and materials will be provided to parents to continue the learning at home.

6. **Cell phones** – students are asked not to bring cell phones to GIFT class. Respect and courtesy dictate that full attention is given to the catechists and other students. If cell phones are brought, they must be deposited in a basket at the classroom door. Students may retrieve them on their way out after dismissal.

7. **Weather-related cancellations** – if severe weather conditions occur, the Director of Religious Education will make the call about whether or not to cancel GIFT. Such information will be emailed to families. If weather is a concern, use your best judgment about whether or not to make the trip; your safety is of utmost importance.

8. GIFT exists in **partnership with parents**. As the most influential person in the faith life of your child, we ask you to do the following things in support of our efforts at GIFT:

- Pray together as a family
- Attend weekly worship with your child(ren)
- Discuss what your child(ren) is learning in the classroom.
- Live Catholic values in your home (foster forgiveness, sharing, reaching out to the poor, just and honest living, care for the environment, etc.)
- Encourage your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to participate in Children’s Liturgy of the Word offered at the Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses so they can be further shaped by Gospel values
- Attend Family GIFT Days together
- Affirm and thank our catechists frequently
- Fulfill the pledges you made on the back of the GIFT registration form

9. **Communication** – email is the primary mode of communication used for GIFT. Please be certain that the office has your most recent email address(es).

10. **Participation in athletics** – per the CSAA regulations, eligibility for participation in sports is as follows:

- The student must attend Holy Trinity school OR be enrolled and actively participating in the parish GIFT program (or an alternative weekly program; see #11 below).
- The student must be a baptized Catholic and must have completed the appropriate sacraments for their age level (2<sup>nd</sup> grade First Reconciliation and Holy Communion; 8<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation)
- Parents and guardians must be registered members of Holy Trinity parish

11. **Alternatives to the Sunday morning GIFT program** – several other parishes in our region offer Faith Formation programs in the evening on different days of the week and are agreeable to accepting students from Holy Trinity. If, for some reason, Sunday GIFT poses a problem for you, you may contact the Director of Religious Education for a list of options. We will supply you with an attendance sheet that will be signed by the catechists of the other parish so that your standing for attendance and athletic eligibility is credited.

12. In the past it seems there was an unspoken understanding that 8<sup>th</sup> graders were finished with the GIFT program after celebrating Confirmation. **The sacrament of Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation into our Catholic faith**, so any suggestion that celebration of it equates to “graduation” from learning about our faith would be unfortunate. Please discuss this with your 8<sup>th</sup> grader so that they do not receive a false impression that Catholics ever stop learning and growing into discipleship. Remember that the entire curriculum in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year is not simply preparation for Confirmation; there is a regular 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum to complete. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders who attend Holy Trinity School also continue with their 8<sup>th</sup> grade religion class following Confirmation