

ST. JOHN CANTIUS YOUTH FORMATION



Calendar for
2025-2026



“What kind of work can be more noble, than to cultivate the minds of young people, guarding it carefully, so that the knowledge and love of God and His holy precepts, go hand-in-hand with learning?

To form young Christians and citizens, is not this the most beautiful and noble minded way to make use of life, of all one’s talents and energy?”

St. John Cantius

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A Letter from Your DRE

August 2025

Dear CCD families,

Greetings from our Religious Education Program. If you are a returning family, welcome back! And if you are new to our program, we offer you a very warm welcome! We are glad you are here.

The Religious Education Program at St. John Cantius is very special due to the collaboration between the Religious, lay teachers, volunteers, and all of our enrolled families. Our beautiful Church and vibrant community provide a wonderful setting for us to grow closer to God and to be transformed and restored by Him. Our CCD program is here to support parents in their role as the primary educators of the faith. Our hope is to introduce the children to the treasures of the Church through the weekly instruction, and provide opportunities for you and your families to encounter Jesus in the Sacraments, especially as we come together each week for Mass.

We are so blessed to have wonderful teachers and volunteers who generously give of their time each week. Our program would not be possible without them and we are grateful for their service to the Church. They are looking forward to being with the children this year.

As we begin this new school year, let's pray for each other and our CCD program. Thank you for your commitment to the ongoing formation of your children, and for allowing us to partner with you.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mrs. Eileen Rowan

Director of Religious Education

Religious Education Registration



Register for
Religious Education

Religious Education Classes

First Communion Class (Ages 7- 8)

Classroom: St. Augustine - St. Joseph House

Email: firstcommunion@cantius.org

This class aims at preparing children for the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. The preparation begins in a year-long class in which children receive general instruction in their Catholic faith and a life lived in relationship with Christ. Learning how to pray, examining the difference between right and wrong, studying the Ten Commandments, and beginning to understand the importance of each sacrament are guideposts in starting each child's personal life in Christ.



Instructor: TBD

Religious Education Classes

Old Testament Class (Ages 8- 9)

Classroom: St. Elias - St. Joseph House

Email: oldtestament@cantius.org

One of the foundational areas of focus for an authentically lived Catholic life is knowledge of our own tradition and heritage. Spending a year studying, reading, and praying with the books and stories of the Old Testament afford each child time to become personally familiar with the important stories and histories of our faith. Familiarity with the Old Testament naturally leads one to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the New Testament.



Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Quinones has been a parishioner at St. John Cantius since 2019. He has been involved with the Schola Cantorum, Biretta Bookstore, and young adult group. He is currently in his residency as an emergency medicine doctor, and has experience leading youth groups and tutoring schoolchildren in the past.

New Testament Class (Ages 9 - 10)

Classroom - St. Jude - Church Basement

Email: newtestament@cantius.org

Transitioning from a deeper familiarity of the Old Testament, children now begin to pour over the important passages of the New Testament. The four Gospel accounts should be texts that each student has a basic knowledge of and a personal relationship with. Beyond just a general knowledge of these writings, the hope of this class is that children will see and understand the Good News of Christ's coming among men.



Instructor: Br. Mateusz Szymanski, SJC is excited to teach the Good News of the New Testament this year. He is 35 years old, and born in Warsaw, Poland. In 2019 he came overseas to discern his religious vocation with the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius. He enjoys bike rides and exploring various nature sites. He is looking forward to seeing you in class and finding out how the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ!

Religious Education Classes

Confirmation A (Ages 10- 11)

Classroom: Library - Church Basement

Email: confirmationA@cantius.org

This first year of Confirmation preparation will begin the child's first steps towards an individual ownership of their faith. Building upon their knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, children in this class will start to examine the broader tradition of the Church as well as how to live a life of Catholic discipleship. Full participation in the life of the Church is the goal of this class: participation in which students are able to articulate their faith both corporately and personally.



Instructor: Br. Joshua Smerker, SJC was born and raised in Helena, Montana, where he spent much of his childhood outdoors, with a deep love for fishing and skiing. In the summer of 2021, he joined the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius and has been stationed at the parish since. This will be his second year assisting and teaching Confirmation A.

Confirmation B (Ages 11- 12)

Classroom: St. Therese Hall - St. Joseph House

Email: confirmationB@cantius.org

The program is structured as a pilgrimage towards the great day of Confirmation. It is to be completed only *after* Confirmation A and will contain three inseparable elements: Prayer, study, and witness. These will be expressed through class prayer, a retreat, discussion about friendship with Christ, a comprehensive review of the Catechism, supernatural destiny and purpose of life, and service to the poor, the elderly and the Gospel of Life.



Instructor: Mr. Bill Melichar grew up in the Chicago west suburbs and has been a parishioner at St. John Cantius since 1998. A graduate of Loyola University Law School, he volunteers as an attorney representing the best interests of children in guardianship cases. In 2018 he completed a master's degree in Dogmatic Theology summa cum laude.

Additional Information

Primary Educators

St. John Cantius recognizes and respects the primary role of parents in the education of their own children. The means used for this education fall within the prerogative of the parents. However, the administration of the sacraments is the responsibility of the pastor.

- **Archdiocesan policy states:** *“The pastor or his designate shall determine the readiness of children in light of their disposition and preparation prior to the first reception of the sacraments.”* (Canons 777 & 914)

Therefore, it is not permissible to present your child for any of these sacraments unless and until the child has been determined ready by the pastor.

All classes begin promptly at 10:00 a.m.

- All students in the First Communion Class will not be released from the classroom until a parent or sibling presents themselves to pick up the student. The other classes will be released on their own.
- If anyone other than a parent or sibling will pick up your child, please send an email authorizing what day this will occur.

Attendance

Email notification to the class instructor is necessary for an excused absence. More than *three unexcused absences* will result in the student being dismissed from the program.

- N.B. Programs, sports, recitals, vacations are not acceptable reasons for absence and are considered *unexcused*.

Additional Information

Class Cancellations

Classes may be canceled due to inclement weather. You will be notified by email either the night before or early morning should a class be canceled.

Behavioral Issues

If problems occur, the instructor will correct the student as needed. If problems persist, the parents will then be notified and if necessary, the student will be dismissed from the program.

***Praesidium* - Empowering God's Children**

Sunday, January 11, 2026, each Religious Education Instructor will be teaching our annual "Teaching Safety - Empowering God's Children" class. This class fulfills the requirements of the Archdiocese of Chicago for all parishes and their Religious Education programs.

The class will be taught at an age-appropriate level. This year's lesson will focus on "Boundaries & Friendships." It is important that all students attend this class.

If there is any reason that would prohibit a student from attending please complete the "opt-out" form and turn it in by Sunday, January 11th.

Religious Education Calendar

Fall Semester, 2025

10:00am in the Parish Hall:

August 24 - Registration Weekend

August 31 - Registration Weekend

September 7 - Orientation & Classroom Visit

September 14 - First Day of Class

September 21 - Class

September 28 - Class

October 5 - Class

October 12 - Class

October 19 - NO CLASS (Feast of St. John Cantius)

October 26 - Class

November 2 - Class

November 9 - Class

November 16 - Class

November 23 - Class

November 30 - NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

December 7 - Class

December 14 - Class

December 21 - Class

December 28 & January 4 - Christmas Break

Religious Education Calendar

Spring Semester, 2026

January 11 - *Praesidium Class* (More information on Pg. 8)

January 18 - Class

January 25 - Class

February 1 - Class

February 8 - Class

February 15 - Class

February 22 - Class

March 1 - Class

March 8 - Class

March 15 - Class

March 22 - Class

March 29 - NO CLASS (Palm Sunday)

April 5 - NO CLASS (Easter Sunday)

April 11 - First Confessions

April 12 - First Communion, *12:30 p.m. Mass* (NO CLASS)

April 19 - Class

April 26 - Class

May 3 - Class

May 9 - Confirmation Service Project

May 10 - Last Class

May 16 - Confirmation Retreat

May 23 - Confirmation, *7:00pm*

June 7 - Corpus Christi procession with First Communicants

Youth Choirs Registration



Register for
Youth Choirs



Youth Choirs

Choirs Meet Saturday Mornings



Holy Innocents Choir (Ages 5 - 8)

Classroom: Library - Church Basement

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Email: holyinnocents@cantius.org

The Holy Innocents Choir is for young beginner vocalists, ages 5 - 8. The children learn to match pitch, develop rhythmic skills, sing intervals, and gain a rudimentary understanding of music. This introductory children's choir is designed to develop the music skills of boys and girls so that they might advance into the St. Nicholas and St. Hildegard Choirs.

Youth Choirs



St. Nicholas Boys Choir (Ages 8 - 13)

Classroom: St. Elias - St. Joseph

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Email: nicholas@cantius.org

The St. Nicholas Choir offers an opportunity for grade school aged boys to learn how to read and sing music, as well as develop their skills in part-singing, Gregorian chant and some polyphony. Among the main goals of this choir is the development of musicianship, sight-singing, music history, and the spirituality of Sacred Music.



St. Hildegard Choir (Ages 8 - 13)

Classroom: St. Augustine- St. Joseph

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Email: hildegard@cantius.org

The St. Hildegard Choir offers an opportunity for grade school aged girls to learn how to read and sing music, as well as develop their skills in part-singing, Gregorian chant and some polyphony. Among the main goals of this choir is the development of musicianship, sight-singing, music history, and the spirituality of Sacred Music.



Magnificat Choir (Ages 13 - 19)

Classroom: St. Cecilia Hall - St. Joseph House

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Email: magnificat@cantius.org

The Magnificat Choir of St. John Cantius Church is composed of high school students and young adult vocalists singing polyphonic choral music, Gregorian chant, and modern choral works. This choir sings music by Palestrina, Victoria, Lassus, Durufle, Bartolucci, Part and others.

Youth Choirs Calendar

Fall Semester, 2025

August 24 - Registration Weekend

August 31 - Registration Weekend

September 6 - Choirs First Rehearsal

September 13 - Choirs Rehearse

September 20 - Choirs Rehearse

September 27 - Choirs Rehearse

October 4 - Choirs Rehearse

October 11 - Choirs Rehearse

October 18 - Choirs Rehearse

October 19 - *Combined Choirs* Sings 9:00a.m. Mass*

October 25 - Choirs Rehearse

November 1 - *Magnificat Choir Sings 8:30a.m. Mass*

November 1 - Choirs Rehearse

November 8 - Choirs Rehearse

November 15 - Choirs Rehearse

November 22 - Choirs Rehearse

November 29 - NO CHOIRS (Thanksgiving Break)

December 6 - Choirs Rehearse

December 13 - Choirs Rehearse

December 13 - *Magnificat Choir Sings, 7:30 p.m. Lessons & Carols*

December 14 - *Combined Choirs* Sings, 9:00 a.m. Mass*

December 20 - Magnificat Choir Rehearsal

December 27 & January 3 - Christmas Break

Youth Choirs Calendar

Spring Semester, 2026

January 10 - Choirs Rehearse

January 17 - Choirs Rehearse

January 24 - Choirs Rehearse

January 31 - Choirs Rehearse

February 7 - Choirs Rehearse

February 14 - Choirs Rehearse

February 21 - Choirs Rehearse

February 28 - Choirs Rehearse

March 7 - Choirs Rehearse

March 14 - Choirs Rehearse

March 15 - *Combined Choirs* Sing, 9:00 a.m. Mass*

March 21 - Choirs Rehearse

March 28 - Choirs Rehearse

April 4 - NO CHOIRS (Holy Week)

April 5 - *Magnificat Choir Sings, 9:00 a.m. Mass*

April 11 - NO CHOIRS (Easter Octave)

April 18 - Choirs Rehearse

April 25 - Choirs Rehearse

May 2 - Choirs Rehearse

May 9 - Choirs Final Rehearsal

May 10 - *Combined Choirs* Sing, 9:00 a.m. Mass*

May 14 - *Magnificat Choir Sings, 7:30 p.m. Mass*

**Combined Choirs include:*

Holy Innocents Choir, St. Nicholas Choir & St. Hildegard Choir

Altar Server Training

Are YOU called to serve?



Autumn
Server Registration

Altar Server Training

Instructors: Br. Joshua Smerker, SJC & Br. Juan Garcia, SJC

Our Parish altar servers provide a liturgical ministry for assistance at all parish Masses. After boys receive their First Holy Communion, they become eligible to be trained as altar servers. The Parish, preserving the tradition of men and boys serving at the altar, hopes to foster many vocations to the Catholic Priesthood.

Fall Semester

Training on how to serve the Mass according to the 2002 Missal (the 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.) will take place on six consecutive Tuesday evenings from 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. or Wednesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Spring Semester

Training on how to serve the Mass according to the 1962 Missal (the 7:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.) will take place on six consecutive Tuesday evenings from 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. or Wednesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Altar Server Training

Fall Semester, 2025 *Training in the 2002 Missal*

Tuesdays

7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

September 23 - Training
September 30 - Training
October 7 - Training
October 14 - Training
October 21 - NO Training
October 28 - Training
November 4 - Training

Wednesdays

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

September 24 - Training
October 1 - Training
October 8 - Training
October 15 - Training
October 22 - NO Training
October 29 - Training
November 5 - Training

Spring Semester, 2026 *Training in the 1962 Missal*

Tuesdays

7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

February 17 - Training
February 24 - Training
March 3 - Training
March 10 - Training
March 17 - Training
March 24 - Training

Wednesdays

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

February 18 - Training
February 25 - Training
March 4 - Training
March 11 - Training
March 18 - Training
March 25 - Training

St. Stephen's Guild

Chaplains:

Fr. Nathan Ford, SJC

Br. Juan Garcia, SJC

Br. Joshua Smerker, SJC



The aims of St. Stephen's Guild are:

1. To encourage, positively and practically, the highest standards of serving at the Church's liturgy and so contribute to the whole community's participation in a more fruitful worship of God.
2. To provide altar servers with a greater understanding of what they are doing, so that they may serve with increasing reverence, prayerfulness and thereby be led to a deeper response to their vocation in life.
3. To unite servers of different parishes and dioceses for their mutual support and encouragement.

This year the members of the St. Stephen's Guild invite *all Altar Servers* to join them on the First Sunday of each month for a time of prayer and fraternity at their Server Formation Days! Beginning with Rosary & Vespers, they will then enjoy a pizza lunch, followed by activities.

Server Formation Days

First Sundays, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Fall Semester

September 7 - Meeting
October 5 - *12:30pm Mass
followed by Meeting*
November 2 - Meeting
December 7 - Meeting

Spring Semester

January 4 - NO Meeting
February 1 - Meeting
March 1 - Meeting
April 5 - NO Meeting
May 3 - Meeting

Sisters to Saints



First Tuesdays

7:00 - 9:00 p.m

September 2 - Meeting
October 7 - Meeting
November 4 - Meeting
December 2 - Meeting
January 6 - NO Meeting
February 3 - Meeting
March 3 - Meeting
April 7 - Meeting
May 5 - Meeting

**Instructors: Ms. Monika Culjak, Mrs. Jacqueline Haydon,
Mrs. Francesca Janssen, Ms. Angela Pecora, and Ms. Alyssa Voccola**

Sisters to Saints is a group made specifically for girls ages 14 - 19 who are looking to explore Catholic femininity in the modern world.

This group meets on the First Tuesday of each month in the St. Therese Hall to discuss various topics that girls face in this day and age. The meeting topics range from the art of etiquette, what is true friendship, how to forgive, vocations and much more!



Follow us on instagram
[@sisterstosaints](https://www.instagram.com/sisterstosaints)



Join our email list for
more information!

Crusaders for Life



Chaplains: Fr. Nathan Ford, SJC & Br. Mateusz Szymanski, SJC

The Crusaders for life is a youth-led grassroots organization promoting the culture of life from conception until natural death.

Members, **ages 13 - 19**, participate in a wide variety of events including monthly meetings, training sessions, the Illinois March for life, prayer vigils at abortion facilities, rallies and protests.

The Crusaders for Life meet on the Third Friday of every month in the Parish Hall. Any teens interested in getting more involved in the pro-life movement are welcome to join in. Meetings typically include a guest speaker, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, planning for future events, sports and social activities.

Crusaders for Life



Meetings, Third Fridays, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

September 19

October 17

November 21

December 19

January 16

February 20

March 13 - Mandatory Meeting

April 17

May 15

Praying at the Clinic, Fourth Saturdays

September 27

October 25

November 22

December - NO MEETING

January 24

February 28

March 28

April 25

May 23

SAVE THE DATE: Illinois March for Life - March 18-19, 2026



Follow us on instagram
[@crusadersforlife_chicago](https://www.instagram.com/crusadersforlife_chicago)



Join our email list
for more information!

Don Bosco Days



Both Boys and Girls (ages 8 - 13) are invited to join us for our Don Bosco Days! Each season we will host a day camp, beginning with Mass, formation talks (sometimes together, sometimes separate), time for prayer, activities, sports and more.

SAVE THE DATES

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 26, 2026

7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 11, 2026

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.



Be on the lookout each season for emails and posters with registration and more information!

Men's Work Trips



MEN - FIRE - MEAT - CHAINSAWS - WORK - PRAYER

All men of St. John Cantius Parish (13 and older) are welcome to join the Canons at their property in Lawton, MI for a weekend of prayer, fraternity and work on the grounds of St. Anne's Shrine!

Please register to attend and pack a tent, some food, and whatever you need to get dirty and do some hard manual labor!

Come for the whole weekend or just for the day!

SAVE THE DATES

Thursday - Saturday, November 13 - 15, 2025

Thursday - Saturday, April 23 - 25, 2026

Be on the lookout for emails and posters for registration!

SUMMER EVENTS 2026

CHOIR WORKSHOP

Monday - Friday, June 15th - 19th



Choir Workshop is Back!

Join the Magnificat Choir for their annual summer workshop, as they refine their musical skills in large ensemble rehearsals, private lessons, and attend classes on music history, sacred music, and much more!

There are only 45 spots available, and we will accept students on a first-come-first-serve basis!

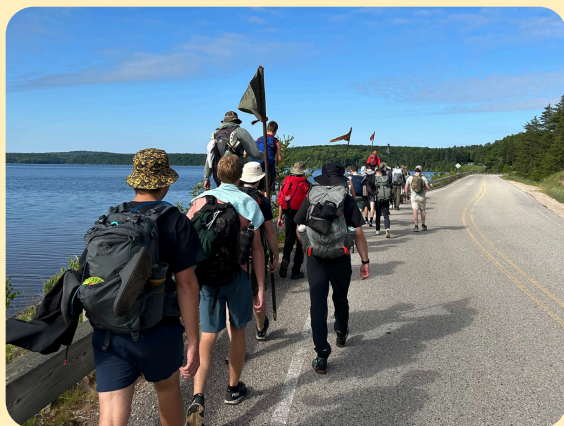
More information to come in Spring of 2026!

WALKING PILGRIMAGE

Boys: July 5th - 10th
Girls: July 12th - 17th

The teens of our parish are invited to join in on a life-changing experience through our annual walking pilgrimage.

Typically walking around 80 miles within the week, this year they will travel to Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, WI, growing closer together in friendship and virtue.



More information to come in Spring of 2026!

SUMMER EVENTS 2026

ST. ANNE'S TRIDUUM

Thursday - Sunday, July 23rd - 26th



St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has always been a special patroness of the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius. This long-standing tradition, in which three consecutive days are dedicated to St. Anne's intercession, is held every year with public Masses and devotions.

This July, 2026 we invite the faithful to come participate and *camp on the property for all three days, or just one.*

Camping will be available beginning Thursday, July 23rd - Sunday, July 26th.

Masses for the Triduum will be offered:

Friday, July 24, 5:00 p.m. Sat. July 25, 5:00 p.m. Sun. July 26, 10:00 a.m.

Keep an eye out for a full schedule and list of activities to come in Spring of 2026!



**Come visit the Café San Giovanni after
Sunday masses for coffee and refreshments.**

**All proceeds help support the
youth program!**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CAFE SAN GIOVANNI

Help us keep the Cafe Open on Sundays!

We rely on Volunteers to staff the Parish Cafe.
Without your help, we cannot remain open.



**Autumn
Sign-Up**



ASSIST WITH CAFE COUNTER:

- Make Coffee
- Wipe Up Spills
- Keep the Paper Goods Stocked
- Attempt to create order out of the inevitable chaos before/after CCD Class
- Cleanup Cafe at Close

ASSIST WITH CAFE KITCHEN:

- Prep/Plate Food
- Bring Snacks to the Cafe
- Stay on top of dishes
- Assist at the Bar as needed
- Cleanup of Cafe at Close

