



Growing In Faith Together

GIFT – Our Parishes' Faith Formation Process

Growing In Faith Together (GIFT) is our parishes' faith formation program, inviting all of us to “flip” our understanding of how we are to pass on our Catholic Christian faith to the next generation. Traditional religious education allows us to teach our children first, and through them, ensure the faith will continue to grow. With GIFT, we teach the parish first, and through our communal experience of God's presence, inspire our children to take for themselves what we believe. Parents are then better able to assume their duty taken at their child's baptism, to be “the first, and best teachers” of the faith. Parishioners are better informed as to the faith they may have been practicing, but without a depth of understanding they now seek. All of us are better able to articulate our common and shared belief, and become better proclaimers of our faith.

What are the goals of GIFT?

- ❖ To bolster confidence in the faith we all possess, as we share a living experience of God in our midst.
- ❖ To ensure that our parishes, in their entirety grow in their understanding of Scripture, Church teaching and challenge to become more Christ-like in our daily living.
- ❖ To integrate “what we believe” into “what we do” as Catholic Christians, and thereby become all that we are to be in Christ.
- ❖ To nurture family faith at home as an integral part of any strong and long-lasting faith formation process.
- ❖ To enable parents to approach the task of being the primary faith formers for their children with confidence and knowledge

How does GIFT work “in the Real World”?

A six year curriculum forms the basis of monthly teachings. Meeting from September through May of each year, participants will be exposed to 9 distinct experiences of our faith. Topics and methods used to “teach” will vary from month to month, and resources will be given to continue at home, what we begin together in GIFT. Our monthly gatherings are called *GIFT Celebrations* and are scheduled around a 2 ½ hour timeframe.

Each celebration will include:

1. **A Prepared Meal**~ to alleviate the stress of food preparation, the parish will provide a meal so that families can relax, eat together, and socialize with other parishioners.
2. **Opening Experience**~ takes place during the meal-time, and both introduces the various elements of the sessions theme, and ties this session with both the one that preceded it, and the one to come the following month.
3. **Learning Sessions**~ will allow the various age groups present for the Celebration to receive instruction in a way appropriate to the age group. Through speakers, the use of various media, discussion groups, and countless other creative methods, each participant will be able to understand and articulate his/her faith.
4. **Closing Prayer**~ the whole community will gather together in prayer to conclude our celebration.

Isn't 3 hours a long time, especially since I have small children?

One thing learned through the years of bringing this great process of faith formation to life, is that we need to start on time, and hold ourselves to the time frame set forth. While we are asking that three hours be set aside for each *Celebration*, we intend to complete all sessions within 2 ½ hours. The purpose of the two daytime sessions is to accommodate as many as possible who find themselves or their children not being able to be with us until 8:30 or 9pm. Much is covered in each session, and with the work of gathering, learning and faith-sharing a part of each *Celebration*, sessions less than 2 ½ hours would not be sufficient.

What will GIFT cost me and my family?

Every effort is made to keep the cost of our program to a minimum, ensuring that no one is left out because of financial concerns. Convenient terms have been set up for all who wish to register for the entire year, or on a month to month basis. Also taken into consideration is the number of family members who will be participating, as well as any additional fees incurred through our Sacramental Preparation Program, described below. Please refer to the Registration Form for all fee levels and considerations. Should you not be able to cover the cost of such fees, just let Fr. Peter know. Any situation will be gladly worked with and full participation ensured.

But more than financial concern is the “cost” of participant’s openness and willingness to grow in their own faith, while at the same time assisting others in their own faith development. The more you are willing to participate, the more we ALL benefit.

Will we have to come to the same *Celebration* each month?

For ease in planning and administration, we are asking that families commit to the same *Celebration* time each month, with the understanding that should you need to make an adjustment to one or two months, accommodation will be made.

What about First Communion and Confirmation prep?

Children who are ready to prepare for First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Eucharist, and teens showing readiness to prepare for Confirmation, are to be enrolled with their family in both GIFT and in a comprehensive sacramental preparation program designed for each sacrament sought. Opportunities for reflection, prayer, and service will be offered.

For First Reconciliation and First Eucharist Programs:

In addition to GIFT, children are offered a two year program of preparation, typically in Grades One and Two, for these great Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. First year students will prepare exclusively for Reconciliation, with sessions typically scheduled from January to April, meeting in between our required GIFT Celebrations. Second year students will prepare exclusively for Eucharist, with sessions typically scheduled from September through April, meeting in between our required GIFT Celebrations. The registration fee of \$30 *per year* is in addition to GIFT fees, and will cover the cost of textbooks, resources and the annual “Fun Day. **At least ONE family member MUST accompany the student to all GIFT Celebrations.**

For Confirmation I and II Programs:

In addition to their participation in GIFT, teens preparing for Confirmation enter a two year program, typically in Grades 9 and 10. Meeting from September through April each year, once per month in addition to their required monthly GIFT Celebration, students will be exposed more fully to both what the Church requires of us as Catholic Christians, as well as how they might better embrace a faith that is truly lived in their daily life. This is accomplished through a format of presentation and discussion, at least 15 hours annually of community service hours which introduce the student to the concept of Christian mission to others, an annual retreat and various other methods aimed at helping all to express what they believe. The registration fee of \$35 *per year* is in addition to *Celebration* fees, and will cover the cost of textbooks, resources and the annual retreat. **Please note that at least ONE family member MUST accompany the student to all GIFT Celebrations.**

When do we sign up?

Registration and schedules for GIFT are readily available by calling either rectory, or logging onto our parish website, www.sstandctiverton.org and clicking on the Faith Formation button. Registrations are taken throughout the year, primarily in July and August, as we prepare for each new year and session.

How can I find out more?

If you have any questions about GIFT and/or are looking for ways to become more fully involved in your faith, please contact Fr. Peter - pandrews@sstandctiverton.org, Deacon Jesse - DeaconJesse@sstandctiverton.org, Joanne Mercier - Joanne@sstandctiverton.org, or by calling either rectory - St. Theresa Rectory, 624-8746 or Saint Christopher Rectory, 624-6644.