



MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY
PARENT HANDBOOK
2018-2019



Gwen Bartlett, Coordinator of Triumph Youth Ministry

www.saintwilliams.org/triumph

middleschool@saintwilliams.org

512-600-8174

Greetings Parents and Youth of Saint William Catholic Church!

As we embark on this year of youth ministry it has been exciting to see the many things the Lord has already lined up to draw your children, your families, and you into a more intimate relationship with Him. Too often in life we are caught with so many activities and stressors that we are simply trying to keep our head above water. This generation of youth is the most stressed out generation in history. Middle school youth in particular have almost an infinite number of ways to reach out and contact others, even forming online or virtual relationships across the world, yet this generation struggles deeply with loneliness. They can type a message to someone in Malaysia but struggle to meet the kid next door or build a friendship with someone they interact with every week in small group.

Triumph strives to help the youth move beyond the stressors at the forefront of their mind. Sometimes they just need help to have their perspective removed from the situation they're being inundated with to realize that there is more in store for them. God has greater things planned for them in the future and He also has greater plans for them right now! Jeremiah 29:11 reminds of us this: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans for hope and a future."

The middle school years are not what they used to be and, unfortunately, our youth are faced with grave moral decisions that used to only impact college or high school students. We must equip our youth with the Truth of Christ, the Truth of Church teachings, and the love of God to help them navigate the moral depravity prevalent around them. If we do not equip our children with the Truth, then they often begin to believe the lies that are surrounding them. That is why it is vital, as parents, to have continual conversations with your children, bringing up difficult topics.

Shows such as "13 Reasons Why" glorified up numerous difficult topics of grave matter and I was amazed when more than 85% of our middle school youth said they had seen that show, many without their parents' knowledge. Many of those youth also expressed that they never talked with their parents about any of the topics the show brought up. Since their parents were not in conversation with them about those topics, the youth were primarily processing that information with their peers. This is just one of numerous examples I could give about how vital it is that we are navigating these challenging topics with our middle school youth.

Please know that you are not navigating these waters alone. You are surrounded by a community who will journey with you. I have been ministering to middle schoolers for 14 years so I am well versed in all aspects of this age group. I am happy to traverse these waters with you, as is the Core Team (our adult volunteers), and help support and equip you however we can in order to help your family more deeply encounter Christ.

It is truly a privilege to have the opportunity to minister to your families and your youth. However, Triumph Youth Ministry is only supplemental to the role and influence of a parent. I encourage you to make your Catholic faith a priority. In ten years it likely won't matter if a soccer game or practice was missed, but their faith formation is preparing them for all of eternity. When you make Mass, prayer, and youth group a priority, your child recognizes this (even if they don't mention it). When you ask them about their faith life and discuss with them what they experienced in youth group or on a retreat, or what struck them about the homily or Mass, this will open a very intimate area of their heart, as our relationship with Jesus can allow us to be very vulnerable, and your expression of love speaks volumes to them.

Middle school is challenging time for youth and their parents. I encourage you to hold steadfast in your faith and, guided by the Holy Spirit, persevere in what you know is right. Together we can help our youth encounter Christ and be transformed into His living witnesses with a passion, joy, and exhilaration that has yet to be seen!

Peace,

Gwen Bartlett

Triumph Youth Ministry Coordinator

Mission Statement

Triumph strives to lead all youth closer to Christ through fellowship, evangelization, and creative catechesis. Triumph seeks to help youth build and foster a personal relationship with Christ in His Church and create a safe environment where youth are able to open their hearts and experience the love of Christ. Throughout all of the activities, events and teaching moments, Triumph seeks to bring Christ's love to the youth.

Parents Role

No one is more important than parents in passing on to their children the priceless gift of faith. The parish family assists but cannot replace the vital role and example of the parents. Triumph is meant to supplement the formation that is already occurring at home. This means that the parent's role is to witness the faith to their children. This is done in direct and indirect ways. All children learn from their parents indirectly when faith is made a priority in the home and parenting/family life reflects virtue and the love of Christ. Parents should also seek out direct ways to form their children in the faith. This includes: family prayer, participation in Sunday Mass, intentional conversations about the faith and morality. Essentially, Jesus Christ should be a member of your family, not merely a mascot that comes out every so often.

One way Triumph is seeking to empower parents is through weekly text updates. For those who sign up, every Sunday you will receive a text message that has a discussion question or two that relates to the topic presented that day at Triumph. This will allow you and your youth to process the faith topic together on the drive home.

Signing up for these text alerts is simple. Text @stwt Triumph to 81010.

Saint William's has also purchased parish wide access to www.formed.org where families and youth can discover hundreds of Catholic video programs, movies, audios, and e-books. Use our **parish code d53bb for free access**. I strongly encourage you to journey with your spouse and family through numerous elements of Formed.

While the Church has been clear that parents are the Primary Catechists of their children, resources are not always present to empower and encourage parents in their primary role. Saint William Catholic Church has an outstanding Adult Faith Formation program that will lead you closer to Christ and empower you to share your relationship with others, including your youth. Find out more at www.saintwilliams.org/AdultFaithFormation.

Triumph Youth Ministry Name

One of the best ways to promote group unity is to name the group setting. Youth are in classrooms with teachers 8 hours a day for 5 days a week. We need to move away from this terminology to help the youth be able to be more receptive to the Word of God and open their hearts to Christ Himself. Moving from a religious education mindset to youth ministry mindset for these young people can often be the difference between them being forced to come and them being excited to participate in youth group.

When most middle schoolers think of RE they think, "Oh, that's something I had to go to as a kid and sit in a classroom and listen to someone talk." We want the youth to be enthusiastic to come to youth group and take ownership of Triumph as *their* youth group. Please help us move away from "RE, class, and student" terminology to "youth group, Core Team (the adult volunteers/catechists), and youth" terms. Most importantly, the youth ministry mindset can greatly affect youth's receptivity and openness so that conversion of heart may take place.



Triumph Sunday Sample Schedule

The schedule below may change to meet the needs of the topic or the youth. Triumph will always begin at 3:00 p.m. and end by 4:30 p.m. on Sundays.

Please ensure your youth is in the Parish Hall no later than 3:00 p.m. We start promptly at 3:00 since we only have 90 minutes with the youth each week. When youth arrive late they are not only missing vital fellowship, prayer, and catechesis but they are also disruptive to those who are on time. Youth are welcome to arrive as early as 2:45 p.m.

2:45 Youth begin arriving at the Parish Hall

This is a wonderful time for building fellowship and community.

3:00 Greeting and Opening Prayer, Icebreaker, Praise and Worship, or Engaging Activity

3:20 Introduction of the Topic

3:30 Dynamic Presentation

This may include a talk, video, skit, talk show, etc.

3:55 Small Group Time

Small Groups meet in the Parish Hall, Pavilion, or Parish Evangelization Center (PEC).

4:30 Dismissal from Small Groups

Youth will meet in front of the Parish Evangelization Center for pickup.

Youth are not allowed to leave by themselves, even to the Church, but must always be picked up from in front of the PEC.

Altar servers at the 5pm Mass may go to the Church once we conclude at 4:30p, with permission from Gwen.

Additional Triumph Activities

Retreats: Fall Retreat is Oct. 12-14

Spring Retreat is Feb. 1-3

Weekend retreats are a phenomenal way for the youth to develop deep friendships with those who share their Catholic faith. Triumph retreats give the youth an opportunity to take a break from the busyness of life to learn about and explore their faith. They offer a chance for youth to encounter Christ in an intimate way and experience conversion of heart. Most youth generally arrive at the retreat on Friday feeling like they don't know many people but by the time they return on Sunday they have dozens of new friends. Visit www.saintwilliams.org/triumph/retreat to learn more!

Discipleship Groups

D-Groups' aim is taking Christians into intentional Discipleship and developing strong friendships in the process. Discipleship Groups, or D-Groups, are for 7th or 8th grade youth who are interested in going significantly deeper in their faith. D-Groups are for youth who have a personal relationship with Christ and his Church, have an active prayer life, and a desire for God. While D-Groups should be encouraged by parents, teens should not be forced to join a D-Group and should join only if they have the desire.

D-Groups are gender specific groups that are closed groups once established. D-Groups will meet on Wednesday nights or Thursday evenings at group members homes. There will be an informational meeting for both youth and their parents on Wednesday, Oct. 17th from 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the Education Building; the youth and one parent must attend.

Keep Up To Date

Check our website: www.saintwilliams.org/triumph

Get updates on social media: search TriumphRR

Dress Code & Code of Conduct

In efforts to create a Christ-Centered environment, dress and behavior must reflect the attitude of Christ. Parents will be notified if their youth is consistently violating the Code of Conduct.

- **Dress Code – Parents, please take the time to communicate this policy with your youth.**
 - All those participating in Triumph Youth Ministry should come in attire that is appropriate for and respectful of themselves, the program, and others. This can be defined for both genders as **t-shirts and tops that are not sleeveless (no spaghetti-straps or strapless), tops that do not have plunging neck/back lines, garments should not be skin tight (leggings)**, do not show mid-drift and do not bear any profane, abusive or offensive language/slogans.
 - Pants or **shorts should not be more than 2 inches above the knee** (this includes work-out and running shorts). Shirts, pants and shorts should also be in good condition, not full of holes. We will ask your child to change his/her clothing if deemed necessary, and will call you if your child does not have correct attire to change into.
- **Code of Conduct**
 - Respect is vital to creating an environment where one can grow in their faith. It is expected that the youth respect the adult volunteers and their peers during Triumph.
 - Bullying and/or aggressive, threatening or violent acts will not be tolerated.
 - Drugs, alcohol, weapons or other illegal items will not be tolerated. If a youth is found possessing these items, the police will be called first and then the parent.
 - **Cell Phones** and electronics are not to be seen or used during Triumph. If a youth brings a cell phone, it must be put away from the time they walk into the building until after they are dismissed.
 - Youth who use their phones will have their phones collected and returned at the end of Triumph.
 - If a youth will not release their cell phone after violation of the cell phone rule, their parent(s) will be notified and they will be sent home.
 - Leaving early: While 7-11 is a tempting treat nearby, God has bigger plans for our youth during Triumph. Youth who sneak off campus or do not go to the proper location will have their parents called immediately.
 - Physical affection: Youth who may have a significant other at Triumph should be sure their conduct reflects a focus on their primary relationship with Jesus during Triumph. Public displays of affection are not appropriate during Triumph.

Volunteer Descriptions for Triumph Youth Ministry

The Holy Spirit working through the volunteers is what makes Triumph a successful youth ministry.

Core Team: Do you love the Lord and love youth? If so, then Core Team may be a fit for you!

The Core Team makes Triumph Youth Ministry effective! They're part of a dynamic team that build relationships with the youth, model God's love, lead small group discussions, and journey with youth in their faith. Most of all, the Core Team are a living witness of Jesus Christ. Core Team commit to helping with Triumph each week.

Discipleship Group Leader: Do you love the Lord and love journeying with youth in their faith and daily life? These gender specific groups journey deep into the faith, building brotherhood and sisterhood focused on 'knowing God and making God known'. A discipleship group leader meets with their small group on a weekly basis and, through the materials and training provided, helps the youth process their struggles and victories on their faith journey and in their life over the past week.

Stealth Crew: Do you enjoy logistics and prefer to serve behind the scene? If so, then the Lord may be calling you to Stealth Crew! The Stealth Crew handles logistics so that Core Team can focus on the relational ministry with the youth. Stealth Crew will pass out name tags, log attendance, distribute Bibles and flyers, and meet other logistical needs. Stealth Crew help with Triumph as their schedule permits.

Prayer Warriors: Do you often include praying for others in your prayer time? If so, then being a Triumph Prayer Warrior may be a perfect fit! Triumph Prayer Warriors vastly impact the conversion of heart and transformation that takes place within the youth and volunteers. Prayer Warriors commit to praying on a weekly basis for all involved in Triumph and receive updates about specific intentions for the youth ministry.

Greeter & Hall Monitor: Do you love saying hello with a smile? Then you may be called to be a Triumph Greeter! These volunteers give the youth a warm welcome as they arrive and help the youth find where they need to go during transition times moving from room to room.



DATE	TRIUMPH TOPIC
9/9	Fall Kickoff
9/16	Identity: Featuring Joshua and
9/23	Small Group Bonds
9/30	Morality: What is Truth?
10/7	Moral Decision Making
10/12-10/14	FALL RETREAT - No Triumph
10/17	D-Group Info Mtg 7 p.m. – Education Building
10/21	Power of Prayer
10/28	Martyr's Ball – prizes for best dressed martyr's
11/4	Respect Life, part 1
11/11	Respect Life, part 2
11/18-11/25	Thanksgiving Break - No Triumph
12/2	Honoring God
12/9	Honoring Family
12/16	Called to Serve: Christmas Service Project
12/22-1/12	Christmas Break - No Triumph
1/13	Spring Kickoff
1/20	Respecting Property & Goods
1/27	Types of Prayer
2/1-2/3	SPRING RETREAT - No Triumph
2/10	Respecting Sexuality, part 1
2/17	Respecting Sexuality, part 2
2/24	Respecting Sexuality, part 3
3/3	Birthday Bash
3/10	Lent 101
3/17	Spring Break - No Triumph
3/22-3/23	Imago Dei (Youth & Parent Day Retreat) at St. W
3/24	Spring Break – No Triumph
3/31	Open Topic
4/7	Explore Catholicism
4/14	The Passion
4/21	Happy Easter!!! – No Triumph
4/28	End of Year Celebration

Triumph