

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for your interest in fostering your child's faith through their Junior High years (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade). **Although the registration fees that cover books, materials and staff are continuous with the Religious Education program, the faith formation program for Junior High youth at St. Isidore Parish is a departure from the K-6 program.** As you register your child for faith formation for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, you are registering them for a Junior High Connection Group with Connect Youth Ministries.

Youth Ministry is a different model of faith formation than the classroom setting your child has been used to. The Connection Group model is meant to be a small Christian youth group which engages your child's religious education in all aspects of their belief. This includes, includes, group discussion, activities, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer time, service projects and retreats.

Junior High Connection Groups might be considered more "fun" than classes, because we put more emphasis on community building time as well as faith formation. For this reason, **Junior High Connection Groups do not follow the same schedule as the R.E. K-6 program.** These groups are formed for a period of 11 weeks, and then your child is free to switch groups to accommodate your schedule. There are three sessions between September and June in which you can register your child. September to December, January to March, and April to June.

This is a good time to address why your child should be registered for a Junior High Connection Group. First of all, our faith is a life-long learning process in which we grow more deeply into the love of God. It is just a good habit for your child and your family to be involved in faith-building opportunities.

**There is also the issue of preparation for Confirmation.** Confirmation is celebrated with youth who are ready and prepared by our Confirmation program. To enter the Confirmation program, which a youth may enter anytime during their high school years, he/she must first complete a minimum of one consecutive year of religious formation. At St. Isidore parish, this is typically done in one of two ways, by attending St. Isidore School in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, or by participation in a Junior High Connection Group with Connect Youth Ministries. To complete the necessary year of religious formation prior to entering the Confirmation program, a youth must participate in two Junior High Connection Groups with no more than two absences in each group.

Again, between September and June, there will three sessions of groups offered. Youth are encouraged to be in a Connection Group for all three sessions, but **must be in a group for two of those sessions in order to be readied for the Confirmation program.** There is no additional cost to participate in three groups rather than two. See the registration form for additional information.

May I also use this time to invite you to participate in your child's formation as a volunteer with Connect Youth Ministries either as a facilitator or monitor. Simply return the sign up sheet in this packet to show your interest and availability.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at [dheimann@stisidoreparish.org](mailto:dheimann@stisidoreparish.org).

In Christ,

David Heimann  
Director of Youth Ministry