

Let's get started

Junior Youth Group



Parish Junior youth group – Where do we start?

What is a Junior youth group?

A junior youth group is a group for primary school-age children (usually grades 3 to 6) that meets regular and is focused on faith, friends and fun.

It has two main purposes:

1. to be a place where children can encounter God.
2. to create a community where children can connect with peers in fun and life-giving ways.

Why start a junior youth group?

First, it sends a clear and joy-filled message that children and their families are welcomed and included in parish life. It nurtures their growing faith at a poignant age when many children make decisions about faith, providing support, role-models, formation, space for their questions and opportunities to serve the community in age-appropriate ways. It also provides a space where children can learn how to engage more with their faith, to learn to pray and to be open to encounter Christ Jesus for themselves. Having the accompaniment of leaders and other kids who talk about Jesus with a social group built on Gospel values provides children with a protective space to belong and be themselves. This early sense of belonging can become the foundation for lifelong connection with the Church community.

Through games, small group discussions, song, and craft activities, kids encounter God's love in ways they can naturally understand. These early experiences help families grow in faith together and gently prepare children for fuller participation in the Church's liturgical and sacramental life.

Simple Steps to Make It a Reality:

1. **Start with a Conversation:** Meet with the parish priest and leadership to share the vision and benefits.
2. **Identify and gather a Team:** Begin with 2–3 volunteers who are passionate about children's ministry and willing to learn.

3. **Onboard your volunteers:** Liaise with your parish office so that your volunteers can begin the process of registering and completing the requirements to be an Archdiocesan volunteer as soon as possible. The Parish office will:
 - d. guide each individual on the correct pathway for onboarding in accordance with the Volunteer Compliance Matrix.
 - e. ensure each individual is linked with the appropriate parish and role.

The parish office (particularly the team member responsible for volunteer compliance) will manage the onboarding process and track each volunteer progress. The Parish Safeguarding Officer then provides ongoing support to ensure safeguarding requirements are maintained.

Once the parish has confirmed the role, direct your volunteers to register via the Welcome Portal: <https://welcome.brisbanecatholic.org.au/>

Volunteers will need to select the correct parish and role when completing their registration.

1. **Meet as a team** to develop a plan (The Archdiocesan Ministries Children and Families team can support you with planning, training and resources). Considerations will include:
 - b. Decide how often your junior youth group will be held and when. Families respond best when groups are scheduled regularly so that they know when to expect it's on. Ideally, aim for every week during the school terms, but starting once a month is fine too.
 - c. Decide on a suitable space for Junior youth group to be held. (taking into consideration toilets, space, indoor/outdoor spaces)
 - d. Decide on a great name for your junior youth group (or perhaps wait until the first group meeting and let the kids decide?)
 - e. Secure a small budget for resources. Basic resources would include: *signs/banners, simple sports, craft, prayer equipment*.
 - f. Create a Parish Activity Plan (or Risk Assessment) to help prepare for practical considerations such as supervision, signing in/out, number of staff/volunteers and activities (your parish will have templates commonly used within your parish).
 - g. Organise registration and permission so your families can register their children's attendance. Decide if families will be asked to pay a contribution for registering their children or if it will be sponsored by the parish.
 - h. Arrange the method of communication for the team. WhatsApp can be a good tool for this.
 - i. Decide how you will organise your roster as a team, who will lead etc.
 - j. Plan how you will let the community know your Junior youth group is happening? Remember your target audience are families, including new families, so be sure to promote on your parish's social media and school platforms as well as the parish newsletter. Sometimes it takes many invitations so don't give up!
 - k. Discuss which other parish teams you could connect with to welcome and engage families (and others) even more?

12. **Become familiar with Resources:** Weekly gospel-based resources are already available and designed to be flexible—leaders can choose what works best for their context <https://archdiocesanministries.org.au/weekly-scripture-resources/>
13. **Launch and Reflect:** Make time to reflect as a team after each Junior youth group and after a few meetings gather feedback from families.
14. **Celebrate and Grow:** Share stories and photos in the parish bulletin or on social media. This builds momentum and encourages others to get involved.

Once your Junior youth group is well established you may want to explore some other great options:

- Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Monthly family mass
- An Encounter Catholic Kids (ECK) fun day or holiday program
<https://www.encountercatholickids.com.au>

We're here to help!

Children and Families Team, Archdiocesan Ministries

Website: childrenandfamilies@bne.catholic.net.au

Follow us on Instagram: @encounter_catholic_kids

Join our Network on Facebook: Catholic Children and Families Network