

RE.A.CH

Religious Education for Adolescents and Children

2008 - 2009

FAMILY HANDBOOK



Jesus taught us what to believe
and then
showed us how to put those beliefs
into practice

The Spirituality of RE.A.CH

Religious Education is a lifelong process beginning at the moment of Baptism and extending throughout adulthood. We never outgrow our need for spiritual nourishment and continuing growth in understanding our Catholic Faith.

In our Religious Education programs for children we acknowledge that parents are the first educators of their children in the faith. In the Rite of Baptism the minister addresses the parents, saying:

“On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring your child up in the practice of the faith.”

We want to support you in fulfilling this awesome responsibility by providing an “Annual Plan” of home and church sessions based on the materials we feel are appropriate for each age level.

We form a “Partnership” with parents in the Faith First Program, offering 18 sessions taught by a catechist at St. Thomas More, and 18 sessions for parents, as catechists, to complete at home, so that there is weekly instruction. These sessions build on one another, so two things are very important:

- regular attendance at class, and
- faithful completion of home sessions.

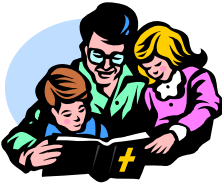
Picture these 36 sessions as a completed puzzle. Each session that is completed adds a piece to the children’s understanding of how much Jesus loves them and the meaning of their faith journey.



An “Annual Plan” is sent home at the beginning of the year, outlining the materials to be covered at home and at church. We ask that the chapter assigned be covered during the week indicated so that the program will have continuity. Children should not work ahead in the text.

Home Sessions

Calendars, “Annual Plans”, schedules, the weekly parish bulletin, and other information can be found at www.stmoside.org.



Catechists, both at home and at church, are encouraged to create a climate that is **not** “school.” The best atmosphere is one in which faith is shared. To have children read the chapter and fill out the pages with no personal interaction makes it difficult for children to get excited about their faith.

To cover a chapter in a number of mini-sessions at home may be more effective for your child rather than trying to do it all at one time. Try to keep it a positive and prayerful experience.

Here are some “real life” suggestions from current parents for making home sessions meaningful:

- “Start with a prayer, asking God to bless us with the ability to teach and to understand what we are being taught.”
- “Eliminate distractions.”
- “Put our home session day and time on the calendar and do it as a family.”
- “We need to sit down and embrace the session instead of treating it like homework.”

The **At Home Family Guide** offers parents direction for completing home sessions and allows you to gather children in Levels 1-8 at the same time and still provide age-appropriate learning. Home sessions are “theme-oriented” rather than “chapter-oriented.”

If you are working with just one child, the family guide will provide you with valuable resources, adding quality to your home sessions.

Teaching by example is the most effective means of sharing faith. If you are able to attend the parish opportunities offered by Faith Formation for Adults, your child sees that your faith development is important to you too!

RE.A.CH Dates for Faith First

Parent/Child “Open House”

September 7 9:45-10:30 AM

(Pick up textbooks, Annual Plans and meet the catechists)

Church sessions:

2008	September	7 & 21
	October	5 & 12
	November	2 & 16
	December	7 & 14
2009	January	11 & 25
	February	8 & 22
	March	8 & 22
	April	5 & 19
	May	3 & 17

RE.A.CH Dates for Teen Faith Formation

Parent/Teen Orientation

September 11 7:00 PM

(Orientation is mandatory for teen and one parent)

CORE COURSES Sept. 14, 21, 28 Oct. 5, 12, 2008

CORE COURSES Mar. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 , 2009

MINI COURSES Oct. 26 Nov. 2, 9 , 2008

MINI COURSE Oct. 27 Nov.10, 17 (Monday Youth Group)

MINI COURSE Feb. 9, 16, 23, 2009 (Monday Youth Group)

MINI COURSES Apr. 19, 26 May 3

Overview of Programs



Pre-K, and Kindergarten: ages 3,4,5

Sunday morning RE.A.CH classes take place during the 10:30 Mass, two times a month on the lower level for children who are 3,4 and 5 years of age. The lectionary readings from Mass for the Sunday provide the basis of instruction for church and home sessions.

Parents are to personally present the child to the catechist at 10:20 AM and pick the child up personally from the catechist at the conclusion of Mass. The security of the child is our main concern, which is why we require personal contact each session.

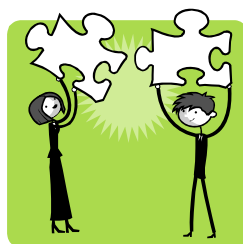
The curriculum for the early years helps children discover God already present in their lives and in their homes and families. It incorporates active self-expression, discovery and inquiry, language and thinking, social relationships, music, art and prayer. Children discover and value all life and all creation as God's gifts to us. They discover they can "make a difference" and change our world for the better. They can love and care for one another, forgive one another, and celebrate life as a small Christian community. Children intuitively respond to God's love for them because they are innately spiritual.

Levels 1 through 6

The program for children in these levels is offered two times a month.

Families may choose the Sunday,

- **12:30-2:00 PM** session (A), or
- **5:00-6:30 PM** session (B).



"Level" is equivalent to "grade in school" **IF** the child has the appropriate religious education background. Placement is made by the Director of Faith Formation after consultation with the family.

The **Faith First** program, Legacy Edition, produced by Resources for Christian Living, is the basis for faith-sharing at Levels 1-8 levels. It follows the same approach that Jesus did. Jesus taught us *what* to believe and then showed us how to *put those beliefs into practice*. This program is based on our beliefs as explained by the Catholic Church.

The doctrines have been passed down to us through the generations and are at this time gathered into the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The four pillars of the Catechism:

- 1) What we believe, 2) how we worship, 3) how we live, and
- 4) how we pray, are the basis of each level of **Faith First**.

Different aspects of each pillar are presented each year.

Every level also celebrates our journey as Catholic Christians reliving the story of our salvation: passing through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time.

Doctrine, scripture, and the liturgical year are therefore balanced each year as an integrated whole, woven into the everyday life and experience of the children.

Junior High

Four separate courses are available for 7th and 8th graders:

- Mystery of God
- Church and Sacraments
- Morality: Life in Christ
- Jesus in the New Testament



Students complete one course each junior high year.

Home sessions at this age reinforce the chapter shared at church through online chapter reviews and additional research assignments.

FaithFirst.com

is an award-winning website enabling youth ministry without walls! It provides faith-based time on the internet for all age levels from kindergarten through catechists and parents.

Teen Faith Formation

High school classes generally meet
on consecutive Sundays from

6:30-8:30 PM

according to a modular schedule.

Two MINI courses meet on Monday evenings from 7:00-8:45 PM.

Teen classes do not meet at the same time as the other RE.A.CH classes so they can have the space available for interactive learning.

The **Horizons** program, produced by St. Mary's Press, consists of five-week **CORE** courses and three-week **MINI** courses. By enrolling in the program, high school students are able to select any of the courses offered throughout the year.

Attendance is mandatory at each class session of a course.

A written assignment may substitute for one session in a CORE course only. There is no exception to attendance at each of the three sessions of a MINI course.

High School students have ample opportunities for discussion, reflection--and fun! The courses expose teens to relevant, real-world topics in an active, engaging way.

Just as young people continue in high school for four years because there is always more knowledge and understanding to be gained, so involvement in Religious Education should continue for four years for the same reasons.



Attendance Policy

Students are asked to be on time! ! !

Please try to be on the property five minutes before class begins. Parents are asked to insure their children's promptness so that they participate completely in the session and are not a distraction for others in the class. This becomes a "priority issue" as sports seasons begin.

If, for serious reason, a child must leave class early, the parent should come to the hospitality table, and we will get your child from class for you. Sending a note with your child will allow the catechist to give your child materials that may be passed out at the end of class and provide the least disruption to the class.

If a student has two unexcused absences in a row, it will be the understanding of the Church of St. Thomas More that **the parent has made the choice** to withdraw the child from the program.

This policy is part of the Covenant we sign at the time of enrollment. We can't do our job if your child is not present.

We recognize that this can become a source of conflict within the family when dance recitals, little league games and other sports practices are scheduled at the same time as RE.A.CH classes. We give you our dates and times for the whole year NOW, so that you can get them on your calendar.

Then it is up to your conscience to set your priorities. Of course, we hope you will put your child's faith development at the top of your list!

An "excused absence" is one in which you notify the Faith Formation Office in advance:

- 758-4100 X 110 or
- kathleenb@stmoside.org

that your child will not be in class.



Fees

Tuition for one child: \$80.00

+

Per additional child: \$40.00 (maximum: \$200.00/family)

“AT HOME” FamilyGuide: \$25.00

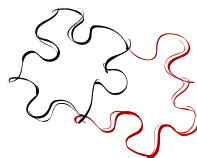
For families with children in Levels 1-6 for your home sessions
The same book lasts for many years.

Scholarship fund contribution: Would you care to include a small gift (\$5 or \$10?) to help our families in need of assistance?

Reconciliation/Eucharist year: \$25.00 (materials fee)

Fees may be paid by:

- cash,
- check (payable to St. Thomas More),
- credit card (Visa or Mastercard),
- a written payment plan , or
- tithing.



Assessment

Accountability is an important fact of life. All of the texts we use provide various forms of assessment. Chapter and unit reviews/ tests allow the catechists to evaluate the effectiveness of personal teaching as well as the level of understanding from home sessions.

These assessments help us evaluate together the level of understanding by the student of the faith concepts presented in each level.

NOTE: The Director of Faith Formation recommends promotion to the next level only when a student has adequately demonstrated an understanding of the faith concepts in the current level.

Progress reports are an opportunity for home and church catechists to share how we are doing.

Sacramental Preparation

★ RCIA

This process prepares children over the age of 7 to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The time involved depends on the individual child. This young person also participates in RE.A.CH classes at the same time.

★ First Reconciliation and Eucharist

There is a two-year period of preparation. Typically beginning in Level 1, both sacraments are then celebrated in Level 2. Immediate preparation is done by the parents during the second year.

Five parent meetings are held from 7:00-8:30 PM to equip parents with the theology and materials to carry out this important responsibility.

September 25

October 23

January 29

March 26

May 7

*Mark these dates on your calendar
NOW, since attendance is required*

First Reconciliation: November 30, 2008 4:00 PM

First Eucharist: May 23, 2009 5:00 Mass
May 24, 2009 8:30 & 10:30 Masses

Again church and home share in this “partnership”, as we welcome the child to celebrate the forgiveness of a loving Father, and the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ.

★ Confirmation

Preparation for this Sacrament is a two-phase process. As a participant in Teen Faith Formation, the choice is given to follow a path to Confirmation. **Come September 11 at 7:00 for details.**

Weekly attendance at Mass is expected as a sign of the candidate’s willingness to live out the responsibilities of a Catholic Christian.

The Bishop administers Confirmation during the Easter Season. Fifteen is the minimal age in the Diocese of San Diego.

Parish Contacts

The Director of Faith Formation is responsible for the development, coordination, administration, and evaluation of all programs designed to meet the religious education needs of the parish community. All parishioners, from our youngest to our oldest, deserve the opportunity to continue growing in knowledge and love of their Catholic faith.

Kathleen Bell is the Director of Faith Formation at St. Thomas More. She can be reached during normal office hours (9:00-4:00 PM), Sunday through Thursday.

Catechists may choose to supply parents with their home phone numbers, but they can always be reached through the Faith Formation Office.

Discipline

Catechists use positive methods of encouraging appropriate behavior. When inappropriate behavior prevents the catechist from teaching and other students from participating, the catechist discusses the situation with the Director of Faith Formation. Parents will be contacted so that we can work together to maintain a climate of mutual respect.

Portfolios

There is a portfolio in the Faith Formation Office for each student in our program. This contains the “faith history” of each student from September, 2000.

Tests, special projects, progress reports, and an end-of-the-year artifact are included, as well as anything else the catechist feels is significant. These are always accessible to parents and students.



Safe Environment

In compliance with Diocesan policy, all volunteers for lay church ministry who work with young people at St. Thomas More undergo a voluntary background screening to insure the safety of your children while they are in our care. Safe Environment training is required by the diocese for Levels 1, 4, 6 and 9. Catechists begin the conversation and parents continue the conversation with age appropriate materials that are sent home in advance.

Special Needs

Parents are encouraged to speak with the Director of Faith Formation regarding special learning styles or particular needs of students in our program. If we are aware we can accommodate more carefully students who might need special consideration.

Please note that the emergency card provides a place for you to indicate special needs, including academic needs.

Students with special needs are welcome in our Religious Education programs. If specialized instruction is needed we will make every effort to provide for it.

Student Insurance

All youth participating in parish educational ministry activities are covered under the blanket accident/medical insurance program administered through Myers Stevens.

Visitors

Because our classes are structured in such a way that they build on each other, and because catechists prepare for a certain number of children, it is difficult to welcome drop-in visitors. In addition, emergency information and insurance are available only for children enrolled in our program. Your understanding is appreciated.

Covenant

At the time of enrollment, each family signed a “*Statement of Partnership*”. The purpose of this is to remind you of our parish’s commitment to your family’s ongoing religious education, and to spell out the family’s responsibilities as well. Since the signed document is on the back of your enrollment card, a copy follows for your reference:

The Catechetical Staff at St. Thomas More will:

- Share faith through class sessions on our site through the dedicated service of volunteer catechists
- Remain in good communication with families through Progress Reports and phone and email availability
- Provide an “Annual Plan” that clearly outlines the curriculum for home and class sessions throughout the year
- Provide quality liturgical experiences for families, including Liturgy of the Word for Children

On behalf of the Church of St. Thomas More, I enter into this covenant:

Director of Faith Formation

Date

The family will:

- Provide spiritual support by attending Mass **every week** with my child, and
- Pray as a family
- Share faith through home sessions, according to the “Annual Plan”
- Remain in good communication by sharing concerns/support with the DCM and/or catechist as needed, and reporting on home sessions on the Progress Reports
- Follow the “Annual Plan” in sharing faith in our homes sessions
- Phone or email the Faith Formation Office in advance when absence is unavoidable

On behalf of the _____ family, I enter into this covenant:

Parent Signature

Date

Attendance Policy:

If a student has two unexcused absences in a row, it will be the understanding of the Church of St. Thomas More that **the parent has made the choice** to withdraw the child from the program.

Parent Initials, indicating understanding :

RE.A.CH

Religious Education for Adolescents and Children

2008-2009 Class Schedule

SEPTEMBER 2008							DECEMBER 2008							MARCH 2009													
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	◆ 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	◆ 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
○ 7	8	9	10	11	12	13	○ 7	8	9	10	11	12	13	◆ 8	9	10	11	12	13	14	◆ 8	9	10	11	12	13	14
◆ 14	15	16	17	18	19	20	○ 14	15	16	17	18	19	20	◆ 15	16	17	18	19	20	21	◆ 15	16	17	18	19	20	21
◆ 21	22	23	24	25	26	27	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	◆ 22	23	24	25	26	27	28	◆ 22	23	24	25	26	27	28
◆ 28	29	30					28	29	30	31				◆ 29	30	31					◆ 29	30	31				

OCTOBER 2008							JANUARY 2009							APRIL 2009							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4					1	2	3					1	2	3	4
◆ 5	6	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	○ 5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
◆ 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	○ 11	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
○ 19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	◆ 19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
◆ 26	◆ 27	28	29	30	31		○ 25	26	27	28	29	30	31	◆ 26	27	28	29	30			

NOVEMBER 2008							FEBRUARY 2009							MAY 2009							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
						1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1	2
◆ 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	○ 8	◆ 9	10	11	12	13	14	◆ 3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
◆ 9	◆ 10	11	12	13	14	15	15	◆ 16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
○ 16	◆ 17	18	19	20	21	22	○ 22	◆ 23	24	25	26	27	28	○ 17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29								24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
30														31							



PK-8



Teen

Morning Session:	10:20-11:45am
Afternoon Session:	12:30-2:00pm
Evening Session:	5:00-6:30pm
High School:	6:30-8:30pm

Kathleen Bell, Director of Faith Formation
 Church of St. Thomas More
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 760-758-4100 x110 or kathleenb@stmoside.org
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