

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Catechetical Office Information.....	2
Philosophy and Goals.....	3
The Role of the Parent.....	4
The Role of the Child/Youth .....	4
Overview of Program.....	5
Sacramental Preparation.....	6
Sacramental Process Schedule.....	7
Registration Procedures.....	8
Attendance.....	9
Field Trips and Off-Site Activities.....	10
Communications Procedures.....	10
Discipline Policy.....	10
Harassment.....	11
Emergency/Safety Procedures.....	11
Catechetical Ministry Contract.....	12

**St. Thomas of Canterbury  
1522 McCoy Avenue  
San Jose, California 95130**

Dear Parents and Students,

This handbook will provide you with valuable information about Catechetical Ministry here at St. Thomas of Canterbury. It is important that you read it and discuss it with your family. Please read and sign the catechetical contract on the last page of this handbook and return the signature page to me. Please keep this handbook in a convenient place and refer to it as needed. We welcome any questions you have and look forward to serving you and your family.

Sincerely,

*Sherry Scott*

**CATECHETICAL OFFICE INFORMATION**

**CATECHETICAL Coordinator**

Sherry Scott, (408)364-8840 (CM direct line & attendance line)

E-mail Address: [cm@stcsj.org](mailto:cm@stcsj.org), or [sscott@dsj.org](mailto:sscott@dsj.org)

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COORDINATOR**

Nancy Sisneros 408-376-3575

CM office Hours: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, Friday  
4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Tuesday (CM office only)  
or by appointment

Phone: 408-378-1595 (parish office main line)

Fax: 408-378-1215

Website: [www.stcsj.org](http://www.stcsj.org)

# PHILOSOPHY

Catechetical Ministry is a share in Jesus' own mission of proclaiming the Reign of God. Catechesis is that activity which enables faith to become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction — especially sharing God's Word in Scripture and sharing the tradition of the Catholic Church. Catechesis is a life-long process for each individual as well as the work of the entire Catholic Christian community.

The Church teaches that the primary responsibility for the spiritual growth and development of children rests first and foremost with their parents. Parents may share this responsibility with others, but they do not relinquish it.

The Church assists parents in passing on their faith through the ministry of catechesis. Catechists echo the Catholic faith in a way that those being catechized (children, youth, and adults) can understand. Catechists must do more than merely teach about their faith. They help children/youth build and strengthen their relationship with Jesus and the Church. Catechists do this by proclaiming the Word, building a sense of community, which leads to prayer and worship, encouraging loving service to others, and living lives as examples to others.

Our catechists are all volunteers, from many walks of life. They are people who have answered a call to minister to our children/youth and who have prepared themselves in a variety of ways to serve as catechists. Above all, they are people for whom faith is important enough to share.

The catechetical process seeks to open children/youth to the discovery of the goodness and beauty of God as reflected in their world, and help them to experience this world within the Catholic Christian community. It seeks to help them grow further in their faith, their understanding of our Catholic tradition, our unity in Christ, and the many gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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## GOALS

**The goals of the Catechetical Ministry Program at St. Thomas of Canterbury are:**

- ✠ **Ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ**
  - ✠ **Full participation in the life of the Catholic Church**
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## **THE ROLE OF THE PARENT**

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Our staff is eager to work with parents to help them fulfill this responsibility and asks each parent's cooperation in the following ways:

- **Celebrate Sunday Mass regularly with your children/youth. The schedule is as follows:**

**Saturday - 5:15 p.m.**

**Sunday - 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.**

- **Celebrate Holy Days of Obligation.**
- **Participate actively in the sacramental and community life of the parish.**
- **Share your faith and what it means to you with your children.**
- **Pray with your children and help them memorize the traditional prayers of the Church.**
- **Attend all parent meetings and Family Nights.**
- **Familiarize yourself with scheduled catechetical sessions and events for your children/youth.**
- **Read and act promptly on all communications from the Catechetical Ministry Office.**
- **Assure your children's punctual and regular attendance at all sessions.**

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHILD/YOUTH**

Children and youth also have a responsibility to cooperate in order to benefit from the catechetical sessions at St. Thomas. They are expected to cooperate in the following ways:

- **Be respectful of the catechist and other children and youth.**
- **Listen carefully, follow directions, and participate in the session activities.**
- **Complete home assignments.**
- **Follow attendance, emergency, and safety procedures and discipline policies.**
- **Share what they have learned and experienced in their catechetical sessions with their parents and siblings.**

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

St. Thomas welcomes all children and youth, baptized or not, to participate in the catechetical program.

### **AGES 3-5:**

St. Thomas offers catechesis for children in early childhood on Sunday mornings during the 9:00 a.m. Mass from late September through June.

### **GRADES 1-4:**

Catechesis is offered on Tuesday afternoon, 4:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m., September through May.

### **GRADES 5-8:**

Catechesis is offered on Tuesday evening, 7:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m., September through May.

### **High School Youth Ministry** (registration is through Youth Ministry):

Ongoing catechesis is offered to students in grades nine through twelve. Meetings will be determined through Youth Ministry. The sessions incorporate prayer experiences, catechesis, discussions, and activities. Retreats, socials, and community outreach activities are integral components of the high school youth ministry process. This program is open to students already confirmed, as well as pre-confirmation students.

**CATECHESIS FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH WITH SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS** is provided in regular or specialized religious education classes. Please contact the catechetical coordinator regarding the specific needs of your child/youth.

## GRADE LEVEL THEMES

St. Thomas uses the following catechetical series:

**Early Childhood** – *Promise*, Pflaum

**Grades/Level 1,3,4,5,6** - *Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts*, Loyola Press.

**Grades/Level 2**-*Making Things Right and Called to His Supper*, Our Sunday Visitor Press.

**Grade/Level** 7-8 Combo - *Celebrating Church*, Loyola Press.

Website: [www.findinggod.org](http://www.findinggod.org)

This textbook series reflects the inspiration of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and describes what Catholic formation calls us to do – recognize the presence of God in our own lives, discern the presence of God in all people and circumstances, recognize the presence of God in our experiences of God's creation, and live as people for others.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The sacramental preparation process is a family-centered approach, involving parents and children (and sponsors for CIC and Confirmation). Families join together for ritual prayer experiences, catechetical sessions, and hands-on activities.

**Families enrolled in the sacrament process are expected to share regularly in the Sunday celebration of Eucharist here at St. Thomas of Canterbury.** In addition, children/youth must be **concurrently** participating in their regular Catechetical Ministry sessions and all workshops.

**FIRST RECONCILIATION (*First Confession*):** This sacramental process is offered to students who are baptized and have completed one year of catechetical classes. We recommend that First Reconciliation candidates be in grade two or higher. For the second graders, the First Reconciliation curriculum is incorporated into their regular catechetical sessions. For students who are in grades higher than second grade, a home schooling program is offered. With the home schooling method, CM functions in a supportive role and provides all necessary material to parents and students. Both groups are required to attend one weekday evening parent meeting and one weekend workshop.

**FIRST EUCHARIST (*First Communion*):** This sacramental process is offered to students who are baptized, received First Reconciliation, have completed one year of Catechetical Ministry classes, and are in grade two or higher. For the second graders, the first Communion curriculum is incorporated into their regular catechetical sessions. For the students who are in grades higher than second grade, a home schooling program is offered. With the home schooling method, CM functions in a supportive role and provides all necessary material to parents and students. Both groups are required to attend one weekday evening parent meeting and one weekend workshop.

**CONFIRMATION:** This sacramental process is a two year process which starts from the eighth grade and is offered to students who are baptized and received first communion, and are in eighth grade or higher. Second year Confirmation candidates must register and attend Youth Ministry meetings. In addition, meetings are scheduled for parents, sponsors, and confirmation candidates. A mandatory retreat is also scheduled before the Confirmation date. All confirmation candidates are required to perform 20 hours of community service and are also required to write a letter about their Confirmation and community service to the Bishop/Pastor by the end of March.

**CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN (CIC):** This sacramental process is for children age seven to seventeen, who are not yet baptized in the Catholic Church and have completed one year of Catechetical/Youth Ministry meetings. These children will celebrate the three sacraments of initiation - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist - at the Easter Vigil. A baptized high school age youth, who would like to receive the sacraments of First Communion and/or Confirmation but has never been catechized, must complete one year of Youth Ministry before joining this process. These youth receive the remaining sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter Season.

# SACRAMENTAL PROCESS SCHEDULE

## ***FIRST RECONCILIATION:***

- † **Second graders:** meet from 4:00 pm. to 5:15 pm every Tuesday
- † **Home program:** children and parents meet once a month starting in October
- † The parent **meeting** and the parent and student **workshop** meet in Becket Hall
  - Parent Meeting:** (parents only): Thursday, October 15, 2009, 7:00- 9:00 pm
  - Parent/Child Workshop:** Saturday, November 7, 2009, 10:00 – 12:00 noon
- † **First Reconciliation Celebration:** Saturday, December 12, 2009, 9:30 am

## ***FIRST EUCHARIST:***

- † **Second graders:** meet from 4:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. every Tuesday
- † **Home program:** children and parents meet once a month starting February
- † The parent **meeting** and the parent and student **workshop** meet in Becket Hall
  - Parent Meeting:** (parents only): Thursday, January 28, 2010, 7:00 - 9:00 pm
  - Parent/Child Workshop:** Saturday, March 20, 2010, 10:00 – 12:00 am
- † **First Eucharist Liturgy:** Sunday, May 2, 2010, 9:00am

## ***CONFIRMATION:***

- † **Youth Ministry Sign up:** August 29-30 after all masses
- † **Overnight retreat:** Saturday and Sunday, November 14-15, 2009, Redwood Glen, Scotts Valley, 8:15am Saturday to 4:30pm Sunday
- † **All sessions meet:** from 10-11:15am every Sunday beginning Jan 10, 2010
- † **Sponsor/Candidate workshop:** Saturday, Oct 3, 2009, 10-12noon, Becket Hall
- † **Service Projects:** CM closet cleaning, Fall Festival, Advent Family Breakfast, Youth Choir, Christmas Giving Tree, bag lunches SHCS, St. Patrick's dinner, Monthly Food/Clothing Drive, Lenten Food Drive, St. Patrick's Celebration, Easter Egg Hunt, Spaghetti Feed, Vacation Bible Camp, and more.
- † **Letter to the Bishop:** due by the end of March
- † **Confirmation Rehearsal:** Thursday, May 13, 2010, time TBD, Sacred Heart Parish, Saratoga
- † **Confirmation Liturgy with Bishop McGrath:** Friday, May 14, 2009, 5:00pm, Sacred Heart Parish, Saratoga

# REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

## A. REGISTRATION

Registration packets were sent out in August of 2009. If you have not received one, please call the parish office. New parishioners please call the parish office about registration information.

## B. FEES

### received prior to September 1, 2009

\$80 first child enrolled,

\$70 second child, \*

\$60 third+ \*

### received after September 1, 2009

\$90 first child enrolled,

\$80 second child, \*

\$70 third+ \*

\*same immediate family

This allows us to cover costs for separate ordering and shipping of student books.

For children preparing to receive sacraments of First Holy Communion or Confirmation there is an additional sacrament fee of \$50. (There is no sacrament fee this year for Reconciliation.) Students preparing for Confirmation are required to participate in Youth Ministry (meets twice/month) and also attend a weekend retreat (November). A Youth Ministry fee of \$45 is waived for students enrolled in confirmation preparation.

If tuition is an issue, do not let it interfere with your child's faith formation. Please speak to me privately about assistance. **Everyone is entitled to catechesis regardless of their ability to pay registration fees.**

## C. BAPTISMAL INFORMATION

A baptismal certificate is required for all children/youth who are preparing to celebrate First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation or who are being registered for the first time.

## D. CHANGE OF ADDRESS/PHONE/E-MAIL

Please notify the catechetical office of any change of address or telephone number (work, cell, or home) immediately so that the catechetical staff will be able to contact you in the event of an emergency involving your child/youth. And, most of the communication between staff and parents will be done through email.

## E. EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Each child/youth must have emergency information on file in the office. Failure to submit emergency information (on the back of registration form) within the first two weeks of catechetical sessions is cause for dismissal. Please see that the emergency information listed is kept accurate at all times.

## F. CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

The primary responsibility for seeing that custody arrangements are carried out rests with the parents. The catechetical staff wishes to cooperate with the special custody arrangements of families to the best of their ability and will do so by following the diocesan policy below:

- A. A copy of the decree of dissolution which defines the custody rights of the parents or a copy of any other pertinent legal document must be on file in the catechetical office.
- B. The person who drops off the child for catechetical sessions must pick up the child. Upon arrival, the parent/guardian or person designated by him or her in writing must bring the child and sign the child in. At dismissal time the same parent/guardian or designated person must sign the child out.

**The child will not be released to anyone except the persons who are listed on the catechetical ministry registration form.**

## **ATTENDANCE**

**Regular attendance is required. If attendance is not consistent, we may be forced to ask your children to repeat the program in the following year. Attendance of the family or at least one parent with the children is required on FAMILY NIGHTS! Please do not drop your child off without your family on Family Nights. We will be doing activities that will require the family's presence and any child without a family member may feel awkward. Attendance will be taken at regular classes and on Family Nights.**

### **A. ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

Parents, guardians and/or carpool drivers are asked to park in designated parking spaces to walk their child/passengers to **BECKET HALL** upon arrival and to pick up their child/passengers upon dismissal. As a safety precaution, the children will not be released into the parking lot to catch their rides. Children/youth riding bicycles to and from catechetical classes are required by law to wear helmets. If students are permitted to walk to and from home for classes, written permission, signed by the parent(guardian) must be on file in the catechetical office.

### **B. ABSENCES**

Promptness and attendance at every class is important for the sake of a complete understanding and for the development of faith in our children. If it is necessary that your child/youth miss a session, a telephone call to the catechetical office (364-8840) is to be made in advance. If your child cannot attend on a regular basis, please call and discuss the situation with the catechetical coordinator.

### **C. EARLY RELEASE**

If your child must leave the session before the usual dismissal time, a dated written request or authorization signed by the parent or guardian is required. A child will only be released to a parent, guardian or person annotated on the child's registration form. The adult must meet the child in the parish office and sign the child out before leaving.

### **D. VISITORS**

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their children's catechetical sessions. If your child would like to bring a friend to class, please use the permission form included at the end of this packet. Permission must be given in writing by the parent/guardian of the child visiting the class.

## **FIELD TRIPS AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES**

Field trips or off-site activities such as service projects and retreats are occasionally scheduled with the permission of the catechists. When such an activity is scheduled, the following policies are in effect.

No child/youth may go on a field trip or an off-site activity unless a completed permission form signed by a parent/guardian has been submitted to the catechetical office. **Verbal permission given over the telephone or in person will not be accepted.** Separate permission forms are required for each field trip or off-site activity. The permission form may be downloaded from our website.

Parents/guardians driving children/youth to and from field trip or off-site activity locations are required to have a current California driver's license, be over 21 years of age, have proof of automobile insurance, and a seat belt to accommodate each passenger in the car. The vehicle should be validly registered and meet safety requirements.

## **COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES**

Parents/guardians and the catechetical staff work in partnership in helping children/youth grow in faith; therefore good communication is essential. If problems develop, they should always be solved at the lowest level whenever possible. If a parent/guardian wishes to talk with a catechist they may do so after the session or they may make an appointment with the catechist by calling the parish office. Parents/guardians may also call or visit the parish office if they wish to talk with the catechetical coordinator. The phone number is (408) 364-8840.

The catechetical coordinator will communicate with parents/guardians by phone, mail, e-mail, or by sending notes home with the children/youth.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

One of the catechist's first concerns is to maintain an atmosphere in which the children/youth can form a community, share faith, and enjoy an optimum-learning environment.

As part of a Catholic Christian learning environment children and youth are expected to

1. Behave respectfully and courteously toward all catechists, adults, and other children/youth. Inappropriate behavior includes disrespectful verbal and body language.
2. Participate positively and be attentive in the catechetical session.
3. Respect parish property and the property of others.
4. Follow the rules of the program and the class.

Parents/guardians will be called if their child/youth repeatedly disrupts the class session. The catechetical coordinator, in consultation with the Pastor, is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations.

## **HARASSMENT**

St. Thomas believes in the sanctity and integrity of all persons: we are all created in God's image and are of inestimable value. Any form of harassment is completely contrary to this belief and St. Thomas is committed to providing an environment free of harassment. According to the Diocese of San Jose, all staff must have fingerprint clearance and must attend a workshop for sexual misconduct. All volunteers must have fingerprint clearance and complete an online course on spotting and reporting child abuse.

## **EMERGENCY/SAFETY PROCEDURES**

The safety of the students and catechetical staff is of paramount importance. All actions will be with the safety and well being of both students and staff members in mind. In the case of emergency/natural disasters the Emergency Procedure Plan will be followed. Fire and earthquake drills are conducted regularly.

In the case of an emergency/natural disaster catechists will remain with the children until either a parent or a designated person picks the children up. A checkout system will be provided for parents/guardians to sign out their child.

You are encouraged to send in for your child an emergency kit in a gallon Ziploc bag, consisting of a bottle of water, a comforting note from you that they can read if you cannot get to them immediately and a small toy or stuffed animal. Always send them with a sweatshirt or sweater with their name on it in case they need to be outdoors in the elements for any length of time.

### **A. MEDICAL EMERGENCY/ACCIDENT/SUDDEN SICKNESS**

In the case of accident or sudden sickness, a catechist or catechetical coordinator will give appropriate immediate care and notify the parents/guardians.

### **B. DANGEROUS MATERIALS**

The catechetical staff or designated persons have the right and duty to protect the health and welfare of the participants of the catechetical program. This includes the right to inspect the property of individuals suspected of possessing alcohol, drugs, weapons and other illegal materials. If alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons, or other dangerous materials are found, the parents/guardians, the police, and the pastor will be notified as appropriate.

### **C. GANGS**

The parish catechetical program is a gang-free environment. No evidence of gangs or gang-related activities will be tolerated. Persons participating in any gang or gang-related activities while on parish property or in conjunction with program-related activities will be subject to immediate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

### **D. CHILD ABUSE**

As required by state law, evidence of apparent non-accidental injury, suspected neglect, or child abuse will be reported to the proper authorities.

St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish  
Catechetical Ministry Contract  
2008-2009 School Year

**Household of:**

**Family Name** \_\_\_\_\_

*On the part of the parents;*

- 1) We promise to offer one another more love in our household, through the exchange of love notes, gifts, and other signs of affection. We'll try to pay more attention to one another, caring for each other, and offering each other both privacy and companionship.
- 2) At least once a month, we'll spend time (with the TV off) compiling a family scrapbook and photo album containing bits and pieces from the people and events of our household.
- 3) We promise to share one significant household meal each week, adding a bit of romance to our table (candlelight, wine, and flowers) We'll try to cook together, linger for a while at the table, and clean up together.
- 4) If there's a quarrel within our household, we'll work for reconciliation which is explicit and expressed in words such as "I am sorry" and "I forgive you."
- 5) We promise to become more conscious of those people in our family, neighborhood, parish or wider society whom we dislike. We promise to gossip less and affirm more.
- 6) We promise to give some of our money for the needs of the parish and the care of the poor. At this point, we promise to give \_\_\_\_\_ during this year. We will take a moment each week to decide together how much money we can afford to give to other needs.
- 7) We promise to be present and active in the Sunday assembly each week, or as often as possible for us. After Mass, we'll continue to observe Sunday as a "day off" from regular life. We'll postpone shopping and work as much as possible and try to do something together as a household, such as a meal, which extends the celebration of the Mass into the rest of our lives.
- 8) We'll help each other memorize certain prayers and lists, and understand what they mean. We'll encourage each other to pray daily, and we'll provide means within our household to make that possible, such as prayer books, sacred spaces, occasional quiet times, and signs of our faith. Every night before bed we'll offer one another a simple blessing: "Good night. God bless you. I love you."
- 9) We will bring our children faithfully to classes each week. We will support them by asking them what they learned in class and we will assist them in any activities that are to be done at home. We will attend parent meetings and Family Nights and we will maintain open lines of communication with the catechetical staff and catechists.
- 10) At least once each week, as a household, we promise to do at least one thing to improve the care of the earth on which we live. This might include recycling, picking up trash, going for a hike or caring for a garden.

*On the part of the students*

- 1) I will be respectful of the catechist and other children and youth. This means that I will not "put down" or make fun of another student.
- 2) I will come to classes with a good attitude, ready to learn and participate. I will listen carefully and follow directions. I will follow the attendance, safety and emergency procedures.

3) I will share with my parents what I learned each week and I will complete home assignments.

*On the part of the parish staff and volunteers*

- 1) We promise to make the Sunday assembly the single most important focal point of parish life, We'll prepare for it carefully and help you as a household to be well disposed for it, ready to participate, and actively engaged in the rites.
- 2) We'll offer you a quality religious education program and we promise to use instructional materials approved by our Bishop and faithful to the wider Catholic Christian church. We promise that the catechists who teach in the parish program will be prepared for their work, and will truly "echo the faith" in their own lives.
- 3) We promise to help you as families to prepare for receiving the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. We also prepare children for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and make opportunities for families to receive this sacrament at least annually.
- 4) We also promise to be a resource center for your household, making available the materials that best meet your needs, including books, videos, music, and websites.
- 5) From time to time, we also promise to offer evening or Saturday programs to assist you as a household in living your faith more openly and explicitly. We will assist you in following the liturgical year in your own home especially during Advent and Lent.
- 6) We'll also help you as a household find ways to serve the ill, the poor, the rejected, and the suffering. If you wish, we'll train you to visit the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely, and the refugee. We'll help you become aware of the needs of the local community in which you live.
- 7) In general, we're here for you, to help deepen and affirm your faith and your Way of Life. We promise to provide the resources your need to help you live within your household according to the Christian Way of Life.

I agree to the statements made above and hereby sign this Catechetical Ministry Contract for the 2008-2009 school year. (please sign and return the next page, keep this page for your records)

*Signed by:*

Parents Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

St. Thomas staff: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(please sign and return this page)*

I agree to the statements made above and hereby sign this Catechetical Ministry Contract for the 2008-2009 school year.

*Signed by:*

**Parents Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**St. Thomas staff:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_