



STTHOMAS

The Apostle Catholic Church

Religious Education 2020-2021

The Diocese of Amarillo has given each parish some in-person class guidelines to follow to help keep children safe this year. In addition, families can opt to have at-home religious education this year. Please read the following:

- *In-person:*
 - These classes will be prioritized for sacramental-aged kids due to the restrictions we must follow.
 - Each student and catechist must wear a mask.
 - Each student will socially distanced in the room.
 - There will be special drop off places for students as parents will not be allowed in the building except for special cases and then only with a mask.
 - Each student will have his/her temperature checked upon arrival.
 - Each student (or parent) should do a health check at home prior to coming to the church for class. Any child or catechist who knows of COVID exposure must stay home until a negative test is received and 14 days since exposure have passed. Additionally, if a child or catechist has any symptoms of COVID, they must stay home until well and at least 10 days have passed. All lessons can be completed at home with online access.
- *At-home:*
 - Parents or grandparents can lead weekly lessons for their kids with support and training offered by RE staff. Every family who takes this option will receive a take-home kit with materials, a child-aged Bible, a rosary, and other ways to create a sacred home space. RE staff will reach out to you on a monthly or more basis to make sure that you have all you need and feel empowered to share our faith with your children!
 - Parents can also opt to have their child sign up for a class that will be led by a catechist in a virtual setting. RE staff will still be checking in on you to make sure your family's educational and spiritual needs are being met. Materials will be sent home to make everything as easy as possible!

Your Religious Education options this year:

There are four options to choose for RE this year from (*please note that not every option is available for every age due to COVID restrictions*):

- “In-person if possible on Sundays” (*for Reconciliation/1st Communion I and II, Confirmation I and II, and RCIC I and II only*)
- “In-person on a weeknight if possible.” *This option is only available for 3rd-6th grade students if a catechist and enough families are interested. More information will follow if you choose this option.*
- “At-home with a parent leading.” *This option is available to anyone. Students in sacramental years (listed below) will have to turn in work on a monthly basis and will have to participate in an interview prior to receiving the sacrament for which they are preparing.*
- “At-home with a catechist teaching virtually if possible.” *This option is available to anyone.*

Please read below to find out what options are available for each grade:

PreK and kindergarten students: we will only be offering material to be completed at home. However, we will provide training to parents, and fun, easy materials to use at home!! Additionally, there will be an RE staff member who will check on you each month (or more if desired) who will offer support and guidance throughout the year!

1st Grade—Students traditionally begin Reconciliation/1st Communion I in this grade level. Thus, this grade student will have the option of in-person classes during our traditional Sunday morning time of 10:05-11:05 a.m. beginning in Oct. Parents can also opt to have their children do all classes at home this year following our guidelines.

2nd grade-- Students traditionally enter Reconciliation/1st Communion II in this grade level. However, the prerequisite for this class is having Reconciliation/1st Communion I completed, so to enroll in the second year, a child must have approval of the DRE. Since this grade student is a sacramental year, he/she will have the option of in-person classes during our traditional Sunday morning time of 10:05-11:05 a.m. beginning in Oct. Parents can also opt to have their children do all classes at home this year following our guidelines.

3rd grade—6th grade—students in these grade levels will have three options this year:

1. Parents can opt for religious formation through their own teaching at home. We have some very easy-to-use materials!
2. Parents can opt to have a virtual catechist. There will be no in-person Sunday morning instruction this year for these grade levels.
3. Parents can select “In-person class if possible on a weeknight” if they would be interested in having their child attend an in-person class with a catechist on a day other than Sunday. If this option is selected, parents will be contacted with more information to determine time and place.

7th grade— Students traditionally begin Confirmation I in this grade level. Thus, this grade student will have the option of in-person classes during our traditional Sunday morning time of 10:05-11:05 a.m. beginning in Oct. Parents can also opt to have their children do all classes at home this year following our guidelines.

8th grade— Students traditionally enter Confirmation II in this grade level. However, the prerequisite for this class is having Confirmation I completed, so to enroll in the second year, a child must have approval of the DRE. Students should have completed their saint project and additional reflection paragraphs prior to enrollment. Since this grade student is a sacramental year, he/she will have the option of in-person classes during our traditional Sunday morning time of 10:05-11:05 a.m. beginning in Oct. Parents can also opt to have their children do all classes at home this year following our guidelines.

High school—initially high school students enrolling in RE will only have distance learning options. We do have some catechists who are willing to teach online for students who would like to have that option. However, parents can also opt to guide their teens in faith formation if preferred. Additionally, if a high school student has not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation, he/she can be enrolled into the appropriate-level Confirmation class instead.

RCIC I and II—these classes are only open to students who have the special permission of the DRE. They are a two-year set of classes open to students 3rd grade and older who have not yet received their sacraments. The age and circumstances of the child in question will determine which sacraments are received and at what time. Students must complete RCIC I before registering for RCIC II.

Can we volunteer to help?

- Yes! We still would LOVE to have your help this year!! There are different ways in which you can volunteer:
 - *Be a catechist*: if an adult (anyone 18 or older) who is a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church and who has completed all sacraments of initiation. This year, you can sign up as a catechist to teach in person or virtually. Anyone who signs up to be a catechist for a group of students will not have to pay the materials fee.
 - *Be a catechist assistant*: an assistant should have completed the sacraments of initiation and be in at least high school. Anyone who signs up to be an assistant for a group of students will not have to pay the materials fee.
 - *Be a substitute*: an adult 18 or older who is a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church and has completed all Sacraments of Initiation who is willing to cover classes when needed.

How do we register?

We have online registration and payment this year thanks to some generous parishioners who have volunteered their time and talents to make this happen! We will send out a flocknote when this is ready!

When you register, you will see two options online:

- **Returning families (i.e. were enrolled for the 2019-2020 year),** you will just answer a series of questions so that we can update our files. You will also have the opportunity to add another child or remove a child who was enrolled last year but who will not attend this year. We are offering this option since we already have your information on file and just need to update it!
- **Families new to the RE program:** you will fill out a completely new registration form. Please note: you do need to register with the parish first!

Do I still have to pay an enrollment fee if I plan to teach my child(ren) at home?

- Yes, because we still have to pay for the materials that you are using to educate your child(ren).

When do classes start?

- Classes start for sacramental kids on Oct. 4, 2020 at 10:05 a.m.! More details to follow!
- Classes for other grades will begin in October as well. Exact date and time will be determined once registrations are received.

Why should I register my child(ren) if I have to teach them? Isn't that the Church's job?

- These are amazing questions!! Actually, when your child is baptized, parents and godparents agree to raise the child in our Catholic faith!! While the Church needs to provide ongoing support to parents, priests, staff, and catechists can only do so much. Therefore, the Church's role is really supplemental to the main role provided by parents. Recent studies have shown that the #1 way to make sure your child stays Catholic is to have his/her parents take the #1 role in their faith formation! This year is difficult in so many ways, but it is also an opportunity for us to empower and support parents in their role as primary faith formers for their children. So to enroll in RE is a way for the Church to actively support and provide for families a way to grow in their faith even during this difficult time. Together, we can do this!

What if I don't know how to teach the Faith?

- That's ok!!! No matter what your own knowledge of the Catholic Faith is, please don't fear to learn with your child(ren)! You don't have to have a theology degree to teach your child(ren) that God loves them, that Jesus died and rose again for them out of love, and that the Holy Spirit is here to guide us. The only thing a parent needs to have is a regular commitment to work with your child in whatever capacity you have. Material for every grade level has been researched by RE staff and has an online option. Many of these materials have a virtual teacher who can step-by-step guide your child from home. You can choose to participate or not (although of course we hope you will join in as much as possible!!) Our hope is that this can be an opportunity for you and your child(ren) to grow in faith together and have conversations about God in a way that perhaps you haven't had a chance for in the past. We at the Church will be here for you in any way that we can be!