

Youth Formation Grades 6-12

St. Thomas More offers a comprehensive youth program that addresses the needs of the whole person...a process that touches not only the mind, but also the heart and soul of the young people we care for so deeply.

The goals of the program are to: (1) Empower and challenge our young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their world today. (2) Draw our youth to responsible participation in the life, mission & work of our Catholic faith. (3) Foster the total person and spiritual growth of each young person...help them develop spiritual disciplines in their lives. (4) Evangelize our youth so that they are excited and eager to participate in their Catholic faith.

Middle School Youth Formation

Grades 6, 7, & 8 meet for 1½ hours on Sundays or Wednesdays. The youth participate in both large group and small group activities, following a rotating schedule of service and social justice activities, prayer experiences and community building activities.

High School

New for 2011: 9th & 10th grades will participate in LIFETEEN, a formation program that features large group activities, small group discussion, adult mentors and cultivation of a prayer life. Lifeteen empowers youth to develop a reliable relationship with Christ.

Confirmation Preparation: Class time is 7:30-9:00 pm on Sunday or Wednesday nights. Attendance in Lifeteen for 10th grade is required. Students are confirmed in the fall of their Junior year.

Grades 11 & 12: Following Confirmation, youth will continue to meet in host homes on either Sunday or Wednesday nights, for small faith sharing & Bible study groups.



PARENT AND TEACHER HANDBOOK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



St. Thomas More Catholic Church
Brookings, South Dakota
1700 8th St. South
(605) 692-4361

(Last Revised: 8/2011)

Religious Education Staff:

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Deb Gilk - *Director of Religious Education, Grades 1-5*
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To Those Who Care for the Children of St. Thomas More Church,

*“Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.”
(Mt 28:19-20)*

The St. Thomas More community of faith continues the mission of Jesus, whose teaching comes to us from the apostles and their successors. We, the Religious Education staff of St. Thomas More, are committed to providing a quality program of Religious Education to the young people that teaches the Catholic faith based on the words and mission of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Jesus' mandate to “Go and make disciples...” was given to the whole Church. Catechesis is a responsibility of the entire faith community; this mission is entrusted to every baptized Catholic. From this it results that every member of Christ's faithful is called to a direct involvement in catechizing. Therefore the title “CATECHIST” is for all of us! We recognize the responsibility and obligation of parents and caregivers as the primary educators of the Faith and are here to support your efforts. Let us work in collaboration: family, catechists, staff and students to build God's Kingdom here and forever. May God bless our STM community!

Class Cancellation Policy

If classes must be canceled because of inclement weather, the cancellation will be announced over the local radio stations. We will also send out an E-Mail to parents (if you have given us your E-Mail address). If school is dismissed early due to inclement weather, there will be no Religious Education classes that evening. **If the weather takes a sudden turn for the worse, parents please use your good judgment in trying to make it to class.** If your child will be absent due to bad weather, please call.

Sacramental Preparation



Sacraments, especially first sacraments, are times of joy and celebration for the entire faith community. They are graced moments in which the parish family participates and remembers its own Christian journey.

Children are prepared to receive First Reconciliation and First Communion in the second grade. Confirmation preparation takes place in the tenth and eleventh grade.

Each family who has someone preparing to receive a sacrament for the first time will be asked to attend special meetings and to be actively involved in the preparation process.

Baptismal certificates are requested and must be kept on file for sacramental verification. Attendance at Mass, RE classes, special meetings, retreats, and service projects is expected.

If a child enters our program in grades 3-12 who has not received First Communion or Reconciliation, please notify the Religious Education Office and we will arrange for preparation and reception of these sacraments.

Catechists: volunteer teachers of the faith

We celebrate and express our deepest gratitude for everyone who serves the parish as catechists! They help to plant the seeds of faith that will continue the mission of Jesus. We are aware of the efforts catechists make to be faithful instruments of God's Word and the personal sacrifices they make to teach in the name of Christ and the Church. All of our Catechists are volunteers and without their many hours of love and devotion, this program could not exist. Please thank your child's teacher.

Book Fees

There is a fee charged for the cost of the student books. The fee is \$20.00 per child or \$45.00 per family (3 or more students). Book fees are due at time of enrollment to ensure spot.

Attendance

Regular attendance at religion classes on all grade levels is essential to the continuity and reinforcement of the religious education experience. This implies arriving on time, being attentive during class time, participating and cooperating with teachers.

Attendance is taken each week. If a student cannot be present for a session, a parent or guardian **must notify the office by phone or email** prior to, or on the day of the scheduled class. **If we do not receive a call, the office will call your home to ensure the whereabouts and safety of students.** Students will not be allowed to leave class early without written consent from a parent or guardian.



Policy for Parental Involvement

The parish religious education programs we offer are meant to support the parents in their responsibility as the first educators of the faith. Family involvement is critically important.

Parents will assist in the faith growth and development of their children by encouraging regular class attendance, family prayer and weekly Mass attendance as a family. Participation in Christian service activities as a family also reinforces the principles of the Stewardship way of life.

Parents are also encouraged to:

- ◆ Participate as a volunteer catechist, substitute, small group leader, youth activities leader, office helper, assist with the Food & Fellowship suppers, or be a hallway monitor.
- ◆ Meet your child's teacher and know what your child is learning. Review their lessons as they are brought home. Volunteer to help in the classroom on occasion. Help your child show appreciation to their teacher throughout the course of the year.
- ◆ Help your child with assigned homework and classroom projects. Have conversations with your child about faith and life issues.
- ◆ Attend gatherings or special events connected with the program.
- ◆ Encourage your child's participation in broader parish and diocesan events when they are available. These kinds of activities help to expand a young person's experience of what it means to be part of a church community.
- ◆ Contact the Religious Education Offices when your child will be absent: 692-6941.

Student Expectations

Students are expected to show respect for grounds, building, classrooms, catechists and other students:

- Respectful behavior is expected at all gatherings in the Church. This respect includes appropriate participation and no disruptive or distracting behavior.
- Fighting, pushing or intimidating behavior will not be allowed.
- Language that is disrespectful will not be tolerated.
- Walking inside the building and the use of moderate voices in the hallways and classrooms will be expected.
- Classroom rules established by individual teachers are to be followed.
- No ipods, cell phones, or other electronic devices are to be used during class time.
- No food or drink is allowed in the classrooms.
- Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared with the assignments that are due.
- Open Gym: If you are here for open gym, stay in the gym. Classrooms are for class time only!

If a student does not follow expectations, every attempt will be made to settle any difficulty in a Christian manner.

1. Catechist talks to student privately about misbehavior.
2. Repeat of behavior will result in dismissal from the classroom, with the textbook, to the RE office. Rachel Mark or Deb Gilk will contact parents if needed.
3. If the problem is not corrected and the parents need to be contacted a second time, parents will be asked to sit in on the class or to instruct the student at home to keep up with lessons.
4. Parents can obtain permission from Rachel Mark or Deb Gilk to have student return to class when they believe the misbehavior will not continue.

General Guidelines

Class Session Choices:

Preschool–Kindergarten:	Sun. at 9:00 AM
Elementary (Grades 1-5):	Wed. (3:45-4:45 or 6:15-7:15 PM)
MS/HS (Grades 6 & 7):	Wed. (6:00-7:30 PM)
(Grades 6-10):	Wed. (7:30-9:00 PM)
(Grades 6-10):	Sun. (6:30-8:00 PM)
(Grades 11&12)	choice of Sun or Wed nights

Certain sessions fill up quickly; register early (in May) to guarantee your session preference. Please consult the Religious Education calendar for our class & event schedule . (see our website: www.stthomasbrookings.parishesonline.com)

Curriculum: Within the classroom, the children are offered experiences in prayer, scripture, sacraments, doctrine and faith sharing. The curriculum is based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to ensure that the Christian Message is presented in its entirety and richness. The texts selected are in conformity to the Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines mandated by the Bishop. Our program is currently using the Sadlier “We Believe” series for Pre-School through Grade 6. Look for the Sharing Faith with My Family pages to be sent home and visit the program Web site www.webelieveweb.com for family-based faith activities to share.

Safe Environment: St. Thomas More is committed to providing a healthy and holy environment for our children to grow in their faith. All volunteers who work with youth to age 18 are required to complete a background check and participate in safe environment training. We use the “Circle of Grace” program for all students. The focus of this program is teaching children that they are made in the divine image of God, and God wants their safety and protection at all times. It allows children and young people to identify uncomfortable situations long before inappropriate actions or touch may occur. The Circle of Grace program teaches children and young people to seek help from a trusted adult, reinforcing God’s presence in their real life struggles.