



YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION
Handbook and Calendar
2012 - 2013

ST. RITA OF CASCIA PARISH
A Catholic Faith Community Since 1908

September 2012

Dear parents,

Welcome to the Youth Ministry at St. Rita Parish. The Youth Ministry serves youth in middle school (6th—8th grades) and senior high school (9th—12th grades) through the following sub-ministries:

- **“Edge” Middle School Ministry** is available for all middle school youth in the parish:
 - **Edge Fellowship** is a monthly gathering for all middle school students.
 - **Edge Sessions** provide faith formation (a.k.a. religious education) for middle school students who don’t attend Catholic schools. Edge sessions take place every Monday after school (except on Edge Fellowship days).
- **High School Youth Ministry** is available for all high school youth, regardless of where they are in their faith journey. They may be in the Confirmation program, already confirmed, or even non-Catholic friends of Catholic teens in the parish.
- **Confirmation Program** is a two-year process for 9th and 10th grade teens preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is a special time of discernment for our teens, and we are very excited to journey with our young Confirmation candidates and their families.
- **Peer Leadership** is an opportunity for confirmed teens to develop their leadership skills and serve as peer leaders in the youth ministry.

We support all parents as their children’s primary catechists (teachers of the Catholic faith). Hence, we encourage you to be especially faithful in attending Mass on Sundays, praying together as a family, and sharing faith stories with one another. This is also a great opportunity for you to seek further spiritual growth besides attending Mass (Bible study groups, prayer groups, retreats, Religious Education Congress, etc.). In addition, you and your family have the opportunity to give your time, talent, and/or treasure to serve in the various ministries in our parish. It is your living out your faith that will have the greatest impact on the faith life of your children. The youth ministry welcomes your help and support. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ym@st-rita.org.

Peace in Christ,

Theresa Bui Costanzo
Director of Youth Ministry



Welcome

**ST. RITA OF CASCIA PARISH
YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION PROGRAM**

50 East Alegria Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION

Theresa Bui Costanzo, Email: ym@st-rita.org / Tel: (626) 590-8828

YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM

In order to have a vibrant youth ministry that meets the personal, social and spiritual needs of over 100 youth, The Director of Youth Ministry leads a youth ministry team comprised of adult volunteers and confirmed teen volunteers who serve as “peer leaders.” The Director is responsible for inviting interested parishioners to join the youth ministry team, providing the team with valuable youth ministry resources, and offering faith formation and leadership training for all team members. Faith formation opportunities include the following:

For adult catechists:

- Workshops at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress and/or San Gabriel Regional Congress
- Basic Ministry Formation through the Los Angeles Archdiocese
- Confirmation Specialization and/or Youth Ministry Specialization
- Retreat(s)
- Virtus Safety Training for Adults

For peer leaders:

- Summer leadership development retreats/trainings for confirmed youth
- All-day training/orientation for new peer leaders at St. Rita
- Workshops for teen leaders at the San Gabriel Regional Congress
- Youth Day at Religious Education Congress

YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS

Adult Leaders:

- Stephen Bollman, Rick Brockmann, Kathy Hagen, Mark Hischier, Marie Hischier, Kathy Kigerl, Chuck McDaniels, Linda McDaniels, and Peter O’Connor

Peer Leaders:

- Christopher Alle, Alexis Arrelanes, Adrienne Fermin, Joe DiPane, Tyler Hernandez, Steven Hischier, William Hurtado, Casey McAlary, Bobby McDaniels, Roberto Merckell, Frances Patano, Mary Patano, Cassie Shima, and Nadia Vallado

Youth Ministry Team

EDGE Middle School Ministry

Goals of Edge Ministry:

- To Foster a transforming spiritual experience of Jesus through the liturgy, which will allow early adolescents to experience the Word of God and the Eucharist in a deeper and more profound way.
- To create a positive experience of the Catholic Church for early adolescents.
- To assist middle school youngsters in gaining an understanding and appreciation of what the Catholic Church teaches and believes.
- To incorporate the Catholic Church's vision of social justice and peace into the spiritual life of pre-adolescents.
- To develop an identity in middle school youth and in the Edge ministry as being a vital and visual presence within the parish community.

Edge Registration for 2012-2013 takes place from August 18 to September 17, 2012.

Edge Sessions provide Catechesis (a.k.a. Religious Education) for non-Catholic school 6th to 8th graders. Edge sessions take place on Mondays, 4:00 – 5:15 p.m. in Msgr. Gara Hall.

Edge Fellowships are monthly youth ministry gatherings for ALL middle school youth, including those attending St. Rita's School. Edge Fellowships take place on the first Monday of each month, 4:00 pm – 5:15 pm in Msgr. Gara Hall. The first Edge Fellowship will be on October 1, 2012.

Lenten Living Stations of the Cross and Soup Kitchen – During Lent, Edger participants will present the Living Stations of the Cross for parishioners, followed by a community “soup kitchen” supper in Msgr. Gara Hall. All Edge families are invited.

Eighth Grade Retreat – there will be an all-day retreat for Edge eighth grade graduates at the end of the school year (date to be determined).

High School Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry aims to implement the three essential goals identified in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)'s visionary document entitled *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*:

1. Empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today;
2. Draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community;
3. Foster the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

YOUTH MINISTRY ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

St. Rita Youth Ministry provides various social, spiritual and/or service activities for all high school teens to experience God's amazing love in a fun and safe environment. They include the following:

- Youth Mass (1st and 3rd Saturdays at 5:30 p.m.)
- Youth "Nites" (2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in Msgr. Gara Hall.)
- Confirmation Preparation Program (see Confirmation Section on next page)
- Formation of peer leaders serving in the youth ministry (see page 3) .
- Life Teen's "Inspiration" event at Magic Mountain (November 3, 2012)
- Youth Rally for Life and Requiem Mass for the Unborn at the Los Angeles Cathedral (January 19, 2013)
- Youth Day at Los Angeles Religious Education Congress (February 22, 2013)
- Live Stations of the Cross (Lent 2013)
- Good Friday Food Fast Retreat (March 29, 2013)
- Life Teen's "Mass on the Beach" (Summer)

SERVICE PROJECTS

We offer the teens an opportunity to learn about the Catholic social teaching and opportunities to serve those in need in the larger community through the following service projects:

- Help with the "Backpack and School Supplies" project for the St. Francis Center
- Help distribute groceries to low income families at St. Francis Center
- Participate in the parish's "Adopt-a-Family" program during Advent
- Help build houses for low income families through Habitat for Humanity
- Make sack lunches for the homeless at Union Station Homeless Shelter
- Help make/serve breakfast to the homeless at Union Station Homeless Shelter
- Collect canned goods at the parish for low income families at St. Anthony parish in San Gabriel

Confirmation Program Overview

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – his actions, his gifts, and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end, catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1309)

The Goal of St. Rita’s Confirmation Preparation Program is to form disciples by leading teens to:

- ◆ Develop a personal relationship with **Jesus Christ**,
- ◆ Experience the power of the **Holy Spirit**,
- ◆ Awaken a sense of belonging to the **Church**.

Effective Confirmation Preparation

- ◆ **Emphasizes what God is doing in our lives**
(NOT what we do to be worthy or deserving)
- ◆ **Works within youth ministry and faith formation**
(NOT as a separate or competing program)
- ◆ **Focuses on preparation for celebrating the sacrament**
(NOT as a place for all of the needed adolescent catechesis)
- ◆ **Involves the community of faith**
(NOT anonymous preparation program)
- ◆ **Works in partnership with parents and sponsors**
(NOT in competition for family time/attention)
- ◆ **Launches youth toward full participation and active discipleship**
(NOT as an end but a beginning)

Source: Confirming Disciples, Center for Ministry Development

Confirmation Program Requirements 2012-2013

Eligibility

In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Confirmation preparation is a two-year process for high school teens, starting in freshman year of high school. Candidates need to have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Eucharist and First Reconciliation.

Registration

The registration period is from June 1 to August 31, 2012. Registration paperwork includes the following:

- Registration Form
- Health and Medical Release Form
- Confirmation Sponsor Form
- Virtus “Teaching Touching Safety Training” Permission Slip
- A copy of the Baptismal Certificate
- A copy of the First Communion Certificate
- Registration fee payment (details on Registration Form)

Mass Attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation

The Mass is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. All candidates and their families are expected to attend Mass every Sunday (or Saturday vigil) and on holy days of obligation, which include All Saints Day (11/1), Immaculate Conception (12/8), Christmas (12/25) and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8/15). The Youth Mass, which is scheduled every first and third Saturdays at 5:30 p.m., is specifically designed to encourage full and active participation of middle school and high school youth in the parish. Its upbeat music and youth-friendly homilies aim to speak to the heart of young people, making the Mass more interesting and relevant to their daily lives. The Youth Mass also promotes youth involvement in all liturgical ministries. One sees mostly youth greeters, lectors, ushers, gift bearers, musicians and extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist. Candidates are required to attend the Youth Mass as part of every Confirmation session, sitting in the front center pews or with their family members in the front third of the church.

Catechetical Sessions

- Year 1 candidates meet on the first Saturday of each month, 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (includes Youth Mass). In place of a session on November 3, 2012, Y1 candidates will attend an all day “Inspiration” event at Magic Mountain.
- Year 2 candidates meet monthly on the third Saturday of each month, 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (includes Youth Mass). In place of a session on January 19, 2013, Y2 candidates will attend a “Youth Rally for Life” and Mass at the Cathedral.

Youth Nites

Youth Nites are social and interactive youth ministry gatherings that provide teens a safe and youth-friendly environment to build community, address various issues/challenges teenagers face in their daily lives, and develop a deeper relationship with Christ through communal prayer experiences. Youth Nites occur twice a month, on the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) Wednesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in Msgr. Gara Hall. Confirmation candidates need to attend a minimum of four “Youth Nites” each year (2 in the Summer/Fall seasons, 2 in the Winter/Spring seasons).

Parish Participation (7 hrs. minimum per year)

One of the goals of Confirmation preparation program is to awaken (in the teens) a sense of belonging to the church, mainly through St. Rita’s faith community. Hence, candidates have numerous opportunities to participate or serve in the youth ministries and in other parish ministries. Parish participation/service opportunities include the following:

- Participate at any Youth Ministry activities (Youth Nites, Youth Day, or other activities listed on page 5).
- Be a lector, usher, gift bearer, singer, altar server, and/or musician at the Youth Mass.
- Be a small group leader for Edge Middle School Ministry (Mondays, 4:00 – 5:15 p.m.).
- Be an aid in the Religious Education program.
- Help at Men’s Club Pancake Breakfast (12/16/12) and/or Spaghetti Dinner (3/10/13)
- Help with other parish ministries and/or events such as the Ministry Fair (9/23/12), St. Rita’s Feast Day, etc..

Serving Those in Need – Corporal Works of Mercy (10 hrs. minimum per year)

“The [corporal] works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his bodily necessities.” (CCC #2247). In Matthew 25, Jesus commands his followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and those in prison, and bury the dead.”

The Youth Ministry organizes various service projects during the year (dates to be determined). Other service opportunities include the following:

- Help serve breakfast to the homeless at Union Station Homeless Services on the first Sundays of each month (7:30 – 10:30 a.m.) Must be 16 years or older. Contact Peter O’Connor (rakster201@yahoo.com).
- Help pack/distribute groceries to low income families at St. Francis Center. Contact Theresa Costanzo (ym@st-rita.org).
- Help escort blind members of the Climb Ministry at the 10 a.m. Mass on 12/16 or 3/24. Contact Deacon John Hull (johnhull65@gmail.com).
- Help sell hand-made items to help missions in Haiti. Contact Ana Ptasinski at (626) 355-3146.
- “Adopt-a-Family” in need by giving them food and gift items during Advent season. Contact Theresa Costanzo (ym@st-rita.org).
- Help knit (or learn to knit or crochet) items for children all over the world through World Vision’s “Knit for Kids”. Contact Ana Ptasinski (626) 355-3146.
- Help local families in need through the Foothill Unity Center. Contact raina@foothillunity center.org or (626) 358-3486.

Retreats

A spiritual retreat has been proven to be the single most powerful way to evangelize our youth today. At the Year 2 weekend retreat, members of our core team including peer leaders share their personal faith stories of how God has changed and/or worked in their lives. Real stories by real people whom the youth have gotten to know and trust in our faith community are powerful ways to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in their lives. In return, our youth are encouraged to acknowledge and share their own stories of how God is present in their lives. The Year 2 weekend retreat will be on April 12 – 14, 2013. There will be a mandatory parent meeting at least one month prior to the weekend retreat.

While the core team plans and facilitates the weekend retreat for the Year 2 Confirmation candidates, we invite the National Evangelization Team (NET) Ministries to facilitate a one-day retreat for our Year 1 candidates. NET Ministries is very effective with retreats because they focus on recruiting, training, and forming teams of young adult volunteers from all over the country who spend a year committed to traveling from parish to parish, conducting youth retreats. The young adult disciples are wonderful witnesses of the Catholic faith for our teenagers. The Year 1 all day retreat will be on Saturday, March 24, 2013, 9:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at St. Rita parish.

Any candidate who misses a St. Rita Confirmation retreat would need to attend a make-up Confirmation retreat at another Catholic parish. The candidate is responsible for requesting that the respective Confirmation coordinator sends a letter or email to Theresa Costanzo by April 30, 2012, confirming that he/she has attended the make-up retreat. Those who do not meet the retreat requirement are not considered ready to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Confirmation Name

Year 2 Confirmation candidates need to select a Confirmation name by December 31, 2012. The use of the baptismal name better expresses the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. If a special Confirmation name is taken, it must be the name of a recognized saint or an acceptable recognized Christian name (such as Faith, Grace, Charity, Prudence).

Letter to the pastor and bishop

At the end of the Confirmation preparation process, Year 2 candidates are asked to write a letter to the pastor and bishop, stating the reasons why he/she wants to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and expressing how he/she is ready to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

Parent Participation

Parents need to Y2 parents are invited to participate in a session with their son/daughter on Saturday, February 16, 2013 on Catholic social teaching. There will also be a Y2 parent meeting on Saturday, March 16, 2013 at 4 p.m.

Parent support and participation in the Confirmation preparation process are highly encouraged. As an incentive, a parent may earn up to three hours of his/her teen's parish participation hours when they help with the youth ministry or specifically in the Confirmation preparation program. Please contact Theresa Costanzo at ym@st-rita.org if you want to help in the following areas:

- Administrative /office work (up to 3 hrs. of service)
- Chaperone for an off-site event (3 hrs. maximum)
- Chaperone at a service project (3 maximum hrs. of serving those in need)
- Help organize a social (potluck or pizza night) after a Youth Mass (3 hrs. maximum)
- Help organize fundraisers (3 hrs. maximum)
- Coordinate lunch/snacks for the year 1 retreat (3 hrs. maximum)
- Chaperone at the Year 2 weekend retreat (3 hrs. maximum)
- Produce flyers for events (1 hr per flyer)
- Provide snacks/drinks at a Confirmation session (1 hr. maximum)

Sponsor Participation

Year 1 candidates need to select a Confirmation sponsor and submit their sponsor Form by the Session with Sponsors on Saturday, February 2, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. After Mass, both candidates and sponsors will participate in a "Ritual of Promise" at the 5:30 Youth Mass. Family members are encouraged to attend Mass to witness the ritual and show support for the candidates.

Sponsors of Year 2 candidates are expected to attend a session with their candidates on Saturday, October 20, 2012 at 4:00 p.m., followed by participation in a "Commitment to the Journey" ritual at the Youth Mass. Family members are encouraged to attend Mass to witness the ritual and show support for the candidates. Year 2 Sponsors are also expected to attend the Confirmation rehearsal and Rite (date to be determined) during the Easter season.

Program Policies

Absences

Attendance is recorded at sessions. Regular and consistent attendance is very important to ensure that our teens get the most out of Edge Ministry or Confirmation Program . Parents will be contacted by the Director of Youth Ministry should there be an attendance concern with their teen. If your child will be missing a session or event, please email Theresa Costanzo in advance at ym@st-rita.org to notify her.

Tardies, Early Departures, Late Pick-Ups

Tardies and early departures should be kept to a minimum. As you can imagine, students entering a class late or leaving early can be very disruptive to the other students in the class. **If your teenager must leave early, please check in with Theresa Costanzo before signing out your teen. Confirmation candidates are expected to be inside the church by 5:30 p.m. for Mass after each Confirmation session. Minors will not be dismissed to wait for parents in the parking lot during Mass (between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.)** Late Pick-ups: If you are late in picking up your son/daughter, please call Theresa Costanzo at (626) 590-8828.

Discipline

Disruptive behavior from students will not be tolerated. After a warning from the catechist, and if there is no improvement, students who are disruptive will be sent to the Director of Youth Ministry, and parents will be notified. If the behavior continues, a conference will be held between the Director of Youth Ministry, parents and student to determine the cause of the problem, possible solutions and appropriate action.

Damage to Property and Facilities

Each student is responsible for respecting parish property and facilities. If damage occurs, parents/guardians will be held responsible.

Emergencies

In the event of an earthquake or other emergency, students will be evacuated to the church parking lot. Minors will only be released to a parent/guardian or persons indicated on the emergency-earthquake form filled out at the time of registration. If you would like to add additional people to the list of those who can pick up your teenager(s), please contact our office.

Permission Slips Required for Off-Site Events

Any participation at off-site event(s) organized by the Youth Ministry/Confirmation Program (e.g. Youth Day, Retreat) will require signed permission slips. Please send an email to ym@st-rita.org to request a permission slip.

Expectations

The St. Rita Youth Ministry has the following expectations of parents, youth participants, catechists and peer leaders:

We ask that our parents:

- be Christian role models for their children;
- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- encourage their teens to keep an open mind and positive attitude;
- be respectful of others in the program;
- read, sign and comply with the guidelines set forth in this handbook;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

We ask that our Confirmation candidates and Edge participants:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- attend and actively participate at sessions;
- keep an open mind and positive attitude;
- respect the adults, peer leaders, and other participants in the program;
- dress modestly when attending sessions and Mass;
- read, sign and follow the guidelines set forth in this handbook;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

As catechists, our volunteers are to:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- be a Christian role model in words and actions;
- attend Confirmation Specialization training provided by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- be fingerprinted and submit to a background check by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- attend the VIRTUS training for adults provided by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- sign and comply with the Code of Conduct outlined on the “Acknowledgement of Adults Interacting with Minors” form;
- be prepared and prompt for each session;
- provide a positive and faith-filled environment for the faith development of our teens;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should any issues/concerns arise.

As peer leaders, our youth volunteers are to:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- attend at least one “peer leader” training and planning meetings;
- read, sign and comply with the Code of Conduct outlined on the “Acknowledgement of Minors Interacting with Minors” form;
- be a Christian peer role model in words and actions;
- be prepared and prompt for each session;
- Communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry if they are late or absent;
- Communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

Family Acknowledgment

This is to acknowledge that we have received the St. Rita Youth Ministry/Confirmation Handbook. We understand and agree to cooperate with the Confirmation program requirements and polices set forth in the handbook.

We will contact the Director of Youth Ministry/Confirmation Coordinator should we have any concerns or questions.

Youth's Name Youth's Signature Date

Youth's Name Youth's Signature Date

Parent's/Guardian's Name Parent's/Guardian's Signature Date

Parent's/Guardian's Name Parent's/Guardian's Signature Date

Please sign and return to Theresa Costanzo at the end of the Confirmation Year 1 Orientation, Confirmation Year 2 Parent Meeting, or drop off at the Parish Office by September 30, 2012.