

Shepherd of the Valley English Religious Education Program “Alive in Christ” (Available in English for Children- English/Spanish for the Adults)

At the PARISH (First Sunday of the Month)

Parents attend a monthly workshop, (while their children are in class at their grade level and with a catechist,) where they learn through teaching, discussion, and activities.

At HOME (2nd & 3rd weeks of the month)

Parents teach their children with clearly designed lessons for parents, with each child having their own book, at their own grade level. All grades cover the same theme in the same chapter, so parents don't have to teach multiple lessons.

In COMMUNITY (4th Sunday of the Month)

Families come together for enjoyable events, such as picnics, feast day celebrations, and activities. (These are like the All-Ages Faith Formation you are already familiar with throughout the year)

Alive in Christ follows a thematic cycle: There are core themes retaught each year, with each year progressively going deeper and expanding on the theme. Although 7 different units are covered in a year, each grade covers the same unit and theme at the same time. One unit per month is covered per year from September through May. Parents are given a detailed picture of authentic and vibrant Catholic family life, the tools to implement this life in their home, and age-appropriate readings, games, and other activities to help them deepen among their children a love for Christ and His Church.

Each year is self-contained, and so families may join at any time in the cycle. Families will have been guided through the entirety of the Catechism and will have developed a broad understanding of the Church's teachings. Families then cycle through the program again to deepen their knowledge and develop the habits needed for life-long spiritual growth. Families, in life-long spiritual growth, are highly encouraged to attend well after sacraments have been made and continue their formation as a family.

Its Strengths: Each child works out of their own book, so parents don't have to invent a lesson plan. Each chapter covers the same theme, just at a different level based on grade. IT'S ONE LESSON FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!!!!!! Not one that was different for each kid. Not a second grade one, not a 4th grade one, not a middle school one, No-JUST ONE! No videos, No Online testing, no “go here” then “there”, then” download this” and then” download that”. No. moving parts. Just gather your kids, make your sacred space, carve out some time, and you only go through one lesson. The guess work is removed. The family opens and closes in prayer, as the parent follows a template for each lesson. Parents explain the theme, then kids Shepherd of the Valley English Religious Education Program “Alive in Christ” (Available in English for Children- English/Spanish for the Adults) can do the reading and activity at their age level in their own book. The best part is twice a month you get to do it when YOU WANT TO DO IT. WHEN it is convenient for your family, your

schedule, and your life. You must remember that you have already been taught the Catechism of that lesson in the first week of the month with the other parents. So, you already have a sound understanding of the topic at an adult level. Now, at a children's level, through a lesson already done for them, you are walking them through it in a much easier, broken down and shorter lesson, you are presenting something you already know.

The fourth week, we come together as a community to talk about and share what we have done with our families, present some of the projects, or do social activities, share reflections or liturgical spiritual preparations.

As you can see, this curriculum flows from a Hybrid Church and parent led program, to a homeschool program if we ever had to do that.

Its Weakness: The parent must be consistent and block out time like they would a job or school commitment on their calendars and stick to it. One needs to make God and their faith a priority and protect it, period. It helps to reward it with tradition and specialness, so family looks forward to it is being "set apart".

Once parents let things slip, it is easy to fall behind. We set up accountability review sheets in the books to help you with this and we encourage parents to partner with other parents and families. This helps strengthen community, support, and accountability.

First Year of those preparing for First Communion: only need to be in Alive in Christ this year and complete the curriculum successfully. Father Silverino and I are currently developing a list of prayers and list of things that those who have completed their first year of Sacramental Prep should know before they are allowed to move onto the second year of Sacramental Prep.

Second Year of those preparing for Sacramental Prep: The Sacramental Preparation Program we have had will not change and will be in addition to this program. That is, it has been successfully taught by parents for 16 years and will continue to be so. That means the parent teaches from a book and we meet with the child and the parent once a month to keep them accountable and on track, lending them the support, catechesis and community they need to be the primary teacher in the second year. They will then be registered in two programs. First: The Sunday school Family of Faith explained above, and Sacramental Prep explained here. The Second Year Sacramental Prep program will meet once a month for an hour. A book will be covered per semester as it always has been. Reconciliation will be completed the week before First Communion in May. The children make a personalized beautiful communion banner with their parents that is displayed at the communion mass. So whatever age or grade the kids are in, the families come together in that once-a-month class, and it creates community, direction, support and accountability the kids and parents need to make their second year not only doable, but enjoyable as both child and parent grow in their relationship to Christ.