

Religious Education in Parishioners' Homes

By Rita Gisriel Cole

In the early 1970's I taught second grade in the "Faith in the Home" program at St John the Evangelist parish. At the time I was not yet married, was teaching at Atholton High School and living at home in Allview. My mom, Martha Gisriel, cleared off the dining room table and fixed a snack for the kids while I was finishing at school. Often the kids would be there when I got home. My sister, Mary Gisriel Henn, was also a teacher in this program. To add to the Gisriel family involvement, my sister Tracy Gisriel Krug received her First Communion in our home in 1970 when she was a student in my second grade class, and then she had Mary as her third grade teacher!

The classes in the homes were held on a weekday after school and were set up by neighborhood. I was the second grade teacher for the Allview and surrounding area students. The teachers who had children would send them to another home in the area depending on their grade. As you can imagine a lot of carpooling was necessary.

We met regularly with the St. John's Religious Ed coordinators, Sister Muriel Curran, Sister Mary Irving, and Sister Anne Marie Gardner, to plan lessons and activities. I remember using books from the religious education program, "Life, Love, Joy." Since the students were studying the Eucharist, we had an outdoor Mass celebrated by Fr. Al Smith right in the backyard of my home.

I enjoyed teaching in this program and always felt that the students liked the relaxed atmosphere of being in someone's home. It seemed less of a school activity and more personal for them. I can't remember how many years St. John's had this in-home program, but I continued to teach in the Religious Ed program at St John's for many more years with my own children.