



STAY Ministry

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
Youth Ministry Office
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Pastor:

Rev. Michael Lydon

Youth Ministry Coordinator for 6th-12th:

Amy Nicole Acker

Life Teen Youth Ministers:

Beth DeBella & Cliff Stodden

Kitchen Crew Leaders:

Deanna Polizzi and Hope Motta

Program Assistant:

Peggy Kohler

Front Desk Coordinator:

Mary Amato

For more information please contact the parish office.

This handbook may be amended at any time at the discretion of the Youth Ministry Coordinator. In the event of changes, parents will be notified.

Our Mission

Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish is committed to a comprehensive ministry to adolescents as defined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry. The goals of our youth ministry are:

1. "To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today."
2. "To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community."
3. "To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person."
(Renewing the Vision, A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, USCC 1997)

There are eight components that we use to accomplish this:

Advocacy
Catechesis
Community life
Evangelization
Justice and Service
Leadership Development
Pastoral Care
Prayer and Worship

While we do have separate registration for Faith Formation classes it is just one component of Youth Ministry.

We believe it requires the gifts and is the responsibility of the entire parish community to help guide our youth.

"Faith is a gift destined to grow in the hearts of believers." It sets in motion, a continuous process of searching, growing and changing that last throughout one's lifetime... and "is the basis for the whole Christian life of the Lord's disciple." (General Directory for Catechesis, p50-51, USCC 2001.) We at St. Thomas Aquinas, are committed in our ministry, to help the youth of our parish to gain a better understanding of the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church, while helping them to foster a strong relationship with Christ.

Admission Policy for Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry is for any youth 6th-12th grade unless otherwise stated. Wednesday Night Edge sessions are for 6th-8th grade and Sunday night Life Teen sessions are for 9th-12th grade students whose families are registered in our parish. All students must be pre-registered prior to attending Wednesday or Sunday night sessions. Guests are welcomed and must be signed in as a guest. They are also allowed with a permission slip at events designated on the calendar from the youth ministry office. For off site and overnight events a permission slip is required for all teens attending. We ask that parents who want to drop off teens and have someone else pick them up arrange this prior to the trip. Edge teens are to be picked up from the center hall and we invite parents to join us at 7:15pm for final prayer time. Life Teen also invites parents to come in at 8:20pm for final prayer time. Edge is from 6:15pm- 7:30pm Life Teen is after the 5pm Mass till 8:30pm (see calendar for more info).

Community Service

"Renewing the Vision" states that *"Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers."* (pg. 37)

Service to those in need is a concrete way to put our faith in action and live the gospel message. It helps to create a social conscience in our youth and helps them see that they can make a difference in this world. Each Year middle and high school youth are required to work on service projects. These can be as simple as attending a one afternoon event to the maximum of a weekend retreat with Habitat for Humanity. The list of service project will be given to the youths' on the first Sunday night session. Each youth is required to participate in one of these or to work with the coordinator to develop their own service project. We also encourage the youth of our parish to get involved in their communities, parish, and family activities involving service.

Discipline Actions

Because this is not school we don't have many problems but when we do we ask that parents back us up. Some kids do not want to be here anymore than they want to be at school. Because of this we have in the past had some issues with name calling, disruptions, fighting, and more. To combat this we have a plan in place. First offense you are verbally warned. Second you are asked to sit up front until the night is over. Third parents are asked to come in and speak with Ms. Acker or Father. Fourth parents are asked to home school the teen. In the past some things have been tolerated but for the safety of others and our volunteers, we will hold these to be followed each week.

Volunteers/ Parental Involvement

“Ministry with adolescents recognizes that the family has the primary responsibility for the faith formation of the young people and that the parish...shares in it.

... Since the family is the first place where ministry to adolescents usually occurs, the Church is at the service of parents to help them enliven within their children knowledge and love for their Catholic faith.” (Renewing the Vision, USCC 1997, p.21.)

There are numerous ways to share your faith with your teen and to grow with him/her. Take advantage of parish adult faith formation sessions/ workshops that offer opportunities to explore Church teachings and traditions. Be a part of a small group faith sharing and /or support group. We can assist you in finding a qualified spiritual director.

Volunteer in the Youth Ministry program. We always have a need for help in many areas (i.e. core team, office, kitchen, mass and more.)

Parents 4 life groups will meet while the teens are in Lifeteen on Sunday nights.* We ask that parents make this a priority. Also on Thursday nights the parish offers bible study which is a great way to grow in your own faith.

* High School Parents are expected to attend two of the Parents faith formation nights each year.

Weather

In case of bad weather please always note that we will not have classes if schools are shut down or if a sever weather warning has been issued. Please call the office and check our extension to see if we have canceled.

Privacy Act

The Youth Ministry Office abides by the Privacy Act and will not disclose personal confidential information to third parties without the written permission of the individual(s) involved. However, your youth's catechist will be given access to the information (name, address, telephone, parent's name, etc...) they need to carry out their responsibilities in the classroom.

Regarding the rights of non-custodial parents, we will abide by the Buckley Amendment. Unless there is a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with unofficial copies of records when such records are requested. If there is a court order, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide the Youth Ministry office with a copy of said order.

Safe Environment

Here at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church we comply with all diocesan guidelines for providing a safe environment for our children, youths, and elderly adults. Complete background checks on our volunteers are performed and safe environment training for our catechetical team, parents, and youths is provided.

Participation at Sunday Mass

All Youth are expected to participate in the parish Saturday or Sunday Mass. Attending Mass with your son/daughter teaches a lesson in faith, priorities and Christian living that goes beyond what we can offer in the Youth Ministry program. It is a lived example of faith in action, and a source of nourishment, giving us what we need to carry on the mission of Christ during the week.

Attending Sunday night Edge or Life Teen sessions DOES NOT take the place of participating at Mass. We have now provided a 5pm Sunday Mass to make this easier for families, please take advantage of it.

Internet

We provide you with the opportunity to receive information about our youth ministry program through email and on our website www.stanpr.org. Please let us know if you do not want to be contacted by email or if you want to but are not getting any emails from us. We ask that if it is a youth's email that you, as the parent, monitor all interaction with parish staff and volunteers.

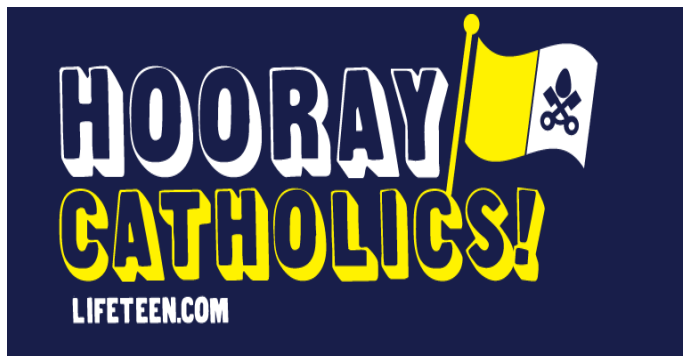
Activities

We put on activities like retreat, bible study, fun trips and more; not for our enjoyment but for our teens. Please make sure that you encourage your teens to be active in some of the other stuff not just Wednesday or Sunday nights. Also if your teen is interested in attending an activity make sure that you print out a permission slip and send it with them. Also for all activities we ask that you pre register; this helps us plan things like transportation. Also often times we have to buy tickets or pay based on numbers and if you just show up we won't be able to take you.

Confirmation

Here at St. Thomas Aquinas we have a two year program that begins with discernment in 9th grade. The actual sacrament can only be received by someone 10th or older unless going through the RCIA program.

Check out LIFETEEN.COM for awesome resources!



STAY Ministry is on Facebook!!