

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
8320 Old County Rd 54
New Port Richey, Florida 34653**

**2016-2017
Faith Formation
Family Handbook
(727) 372-8600
www.stanpr.org**



JESUS LOVES
YOU!

Sessions:

Grade K-5: Sunday 9:00-10:15 AM

Wednesday 4:45-6:00 PM

Wednesday 6:15-7:30 PM

Grade 6-8: Middle School YM *Edge*

Wednesday 6:15-7:30 PM

Grade 9-12 High School YM *LifeTeen*

Sunday 5:00 PM Mass-8:30PM

SESSIONS ALSO OFFERED:

Sacrament Preparation, RCIA (Adult & Youth),
Parent / Family Catechesis, Learning Differences/Special Needs

Our Family Faith Goals:

2016-2017 Formation Year

Dear Families,

Welcome! On behalf of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, thank you for your commitment to your child & family's faith formation. It is our hope and prayer that during this year we may grow together in our love and discipleship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As parents / guardians, you have an essential role in the formation of your child's Catholic identity. The time and energy you spend promoting a rich faith in your child now will bear fruit in so many ways as they mature. You are aware that example is the best way to teach children about the Catholic faith. Your participation in weekly Mass, regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the giving of your time, talent, and treasure to our parish will teach your children more about their faith than any religion class can possibly accomplish.

The success of our Faith Formation process depends upon the support and active participation by our parish families. Please offer your assistance to our Faith Formation Staff to ensure that our education efforts are a reflection of the talents and gifts which God has blessed us with.

May we all grow much closer to God through Jesus Christ and promote "compassion" wherever we go.

Together with you in ministry!
Father Mike Lydon - Pastor

Share
Your
Faith!



Family Resources
for Faith Sharing...

www.findinggod.org
www.loyolapress.com/Sunday-connection.htm
www.usccb.org
www.plaumgospelweeklies.com
www.lifeteen.com
www.catholic.org
www.dosp.org
www.stanpr.org

All of these websites have links to the Sunday and daily readings of the Mass.

The Faith Formation Office also has a library of Bibles, books, prayers, videos and DVD's for loan.

Please stop by the office!

Dear Families,

Welcome and thank you for choosing the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church Faith Formation as a layer of your religious education and faith growth. The staff eagerly looks forward to serving you during the 2016-2017 formation year.

We hope this handbook will provide you with valuable information about the formation year. It is important that you read through and discuss the information as a family. You are asked to sign acknowledgement and agreement of this on your registration form.

As parents you know how important your role is in the faith formation of your child. Please take the time to look through your child's lesson and take home papers. Students, please show your parents any work you did in class. At every opportunity, please gather for our many whole family catechesis and enrichment gatherings.

The priests, staff, and catechists thank you for the privilege of working with your family. The year promises to be rich in meaning for all.

Love & Blessings,

The Faith Formation Team

**MISSION STATEMENT
OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*Learning, Living and
Sharing the Good News
of the Gospel Message*

"In the years to come may the people of
St. Thomas Aquinas continue to grow as a
faith community, centered in our Lord,
Jesus Christ, Who is the Way,
the Truth and the Life."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:
Part Three, Section Two, Chapter Two—

"You Shall Love Your Neighbor As Yourself"

[The Christian Family](#)

[2204](#)

"The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic church*."⁹ It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament.¹⁰

[2205](#)

The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.

[2206](#)

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a *privileged community* called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing."¹¹

Updates, forms and other information will be made available through our website



St. Thomas Aquinas Mass Schedule

Daily Mass:

Monday - Friday 8 a.m.

Saturday Vigil:

4:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.

Sunday Mass:

**7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m.,
10:30 a.m. (Contemporary),
5:00 p.m. (LifeTeen)**

Devotions

Healing Mass:

**7:00 p.m. Monday
September through May**

Marian Novena:

After 8:00 a.m. Mass on Tuesdays

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament :

**After 8:00 a.m. Mass on First Friday
September through May**

Reconciliation:

**Saturdays 2:30pm to 3:30pm or by appointment.
Call (727) 372-8600 during office hours to make an appointment.**

Admission / Curriculum / Class and Mass Participation

Admission

Admission to the Faith Formation process is open to all families! It is encouraged that formation families be registered in the parish, to enable the fullest faith experience for your family, and to enable the staff of St. Thomas Aquinas to best serve you!

Curriculum

Among our many resources:

Loyola Press ***Finding God Series*** for grades K-5

Loyola Press ***God's Gift: Eucharist & Reconciliation*** for First Communion Preparation

Loyola Press ***Confirmed in the Spirit*** and Ignatius Press ***YOUCAT: Youth Catechism***

Loyola Press ***Sunday Connection***, the Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy ***Rite of Christian Initiation*** & Twenty-third

Pflaum ***Visions & Ventures: What the Church Believes and Teaches*** for the RCIA process

Lifeteen Edge for middle school youth ministry and ***Lifeteen*** for high school youth ministry - are all designed to help children, youth and whole families understand what Catholics believe and how to put those beliefs in to practice at age appropriate levels.

With the help of these and other websites, you can stay connected with the curriculum:

www.pflaumgospelweeklies.com, www.loyolapress.com
www.lifeteen.com, www.usccb.org, www.dosp.org

Sacrament Preparation

Reconciliation / First Communion and **Confirmation** preparation are two year processes - beginning in the primary level, usually grade 1 for Reconciliation / First Communion and grade 9 for Confirmation. Specialized curriculum is used for each. Preparation is also available for older children in need of formation and the sacraments through specialized sessions in a process called **RCIA for Youth**. Families are expected to assist in the formation process by ***regularly & actively participating in the faith***. An important way of participation is by being active in the Mass at least weekly.

Class Participation

Since each grade level of our faith formation has its own curriculum focus, regular participation in all grade levels is essential for the development of mature faith -

Faith Formation is a life long process and should continue beyond the early formative years of life through the adult years.

In the event a session must be missed, please contact the formation office and / or catechist in advance and make arrangements for making up the session.

Mass Participation

Parents seeking to raise their children in the fullness of the Catholic faith, should see to it that their family participates in Mass each Sunday and every holy day of obligation. Nothing is more important for faith formation than our celebration of the Eucharist with our Parish community. Please make every effort to participate in Mass regularly.

When traveling, Mass schedules can be found by dialing 1-734-794-2100 or on the web at www.masstimes.org

Acre Assessment

For the purpose of assessing the Faith Formation progress, the Diocese of St. Petersburg has established guidelines for administering the Assessment of Catholic Religious education to grades 5, 8 & 11. The questionnaire will be administered as directed by the Diocesan Office in the spring of the school year.

EXPLANATION OF HARASSMENT:

Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or communication.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical, mental, or verbal abuse.
2. Insults, jokes, or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual's protected status.
3. Unwelcome sexual advances or touching.
4. Implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors.
5. Unwanted sexual comments (serious or humorous).
6. Unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, e-mail, etc.
7. Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness.
8. Unwanted forced involvement in activities (e.g. physical, religious, etc.)
9. Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon a participant.
10. Intimidation in front of a group or forced personal sharing in groups.
11. Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

HARASSMENT POLICY:

Harassment Policy for Non-Employment Situations in Schools/Centers, Parish Religious Education and Parish Youth Ministry Programs of the Diocese of St. Petersburg

The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school or early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with religious education programs, schools and early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish, school, or early childhood center-sponsored event.

This policy intends:

- that each individual is free from physical, psychological or verbal intimidation and harassment -in the schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry settings;
- that each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, religious education and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given dignity;
- to encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status or disability.

This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and ministries.

Weather

We will follow the County School guidelines pertaining to weather alerts, evacuations and canceled sessions.

Sunday classes please call the office for notification on cancelled classes.

Faith Formation Discipline Policy

Students in Faith Formation at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church are expected to behave in a manner that reflects the ideals of our Christian faith and which promotes a positive learning environment in the session. To be able to assist children in practicing self control suitable to their age, as well as establish a learning environment that is calm and orderly, we have some basic rules:

1. Keep hands, feet and other objects to yourself.
2. Talk respectfully—no name calling, teasing, cursing, etc.
3. Follow directions the first time.
4. Bring required books and supplies to class.

Severe disruption of class will result in the child being removed from class and the parent being called. A meeting will be held with the Director at that time.

THE GOLDEN RULE:

Treat everyone as you wish to be treated!

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church Safe Environment Procedures

Our Parish Community continues training by a program established by the Diocese of St. Petersburg to become a “**Safe Environment**” for all our children, youth, and adults. All adults directly involved with children and youth are required to attend this training class and proof will be kept on file.

In cooperation with our “**Safe Environment**” guidelines, we ask parents / guardians:

- Please park your cars and walk your child to class.
Do not drop your children off in the parking lot.
- Be sure that you have walked your child in to the proper classroom, **with the teacher or assistant present in that room prior to you leaving.**
- Please arrive at your child’s classroom promptly at dismissal time to sign him / her out. ***
Do not wait in the parking lot for your child.
Students will not be permitted to leave their classroom without you, or persons authorized by you. *** *Edge middle school & Life Teen high school sessions may dismiss without parent signature (unless stated otherwise in writing by parent).****

THANK YOU for your interest and cooperation in the safety of all those entrusted in our care.

SUMMARY OF DIOCESAN POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Diocese of St. Petersburg remains committed to the well-being of those who are served by the Church, and has placed two rings of protection around our children, youth and vulnerable adults - **a criminal history background check and safe environment program training.**

Background screening - is the first line of defense. A Level 2 Criminal History Background Check of anyone who wishes unsupervised access to children, youth or vulnerable adults. It is a check of an individual’s background predicated upon an electronically taken and transmitted set of digital fingerprints matched against prints contained in the FBI National Criminal Information Center database and the FDLE criminal history system database.

Safe Environment Program (SEP) Training - is the second line of defense. Both SEP Training and Level 2 Criminal History Background Check are required **before** an individual can have the care, responsibility, and or supervision of children and youth or access to vulnerable adults.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg does not accept background screening reports from any federal agency, state agency, or private information vendor regardless of the screening organization and regardless of the position that an individual currently holds or may have held in the past—NO EXCEPTIONS— This means that the sharing of criminal history reports between entities is not allowed.

The complete text of the Policy of the Diocese of St. Petersburg for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults is available on the diocesan website: www.dosp.org