

Parent Handbook

PreK – 8th Grade



**St. Thomas the Apostle Church
Faith Formation/Religious Education**

*Class Assignments and Calendars are mailed in late August.
Calendars are also online www.stapostle.org*

MISSION STATEMENT

*St. Thomas the Apostle
Faith Formation Program
is dedicated
to proclaiming Christ
through teaching and serving,
praying and evangelizing
and living our Catholic Faith.*

Faith Formation Team

Faith Formation Office	(630) 305-6318	Faith and Spiritual Formation Commission	
Fr. Philip Danaher Pastor	(630) 355-8980	Renee Culbertson Parishioner Scripture Safari Leader	(630) 879-2209
Fr. Joseph Kappilumakkal Associate Pastor	(630) 355-8980	Cynthia Rennie Rainbows Coordinator Email: cynthiarennie@gmail.com	
Patti Dougherty Director of Religious Education Rainbows	(630) 355-8980 ext. 109		
Peggy Goralski Director, Middle School Faith Formation	(630) 355-8980 ext. 123		
Brett Adams Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry	(630) 355-8980 ext. 117		
Marge Coronado Faith Formation Assistant	(630) 355-8980 ext. 118		
Mary Beth Nagai Parishioner	(630) 718-1138		

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this handbook is to convey basic information about elementary and middle school Religious Education at St. Thomas. It will acquaint you with program procedures and provide overview information. Specific information about schedule, grade level curriculum, room and catechist assignment will be communicated separately.

1) CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE REGISTERING FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SHARED MINISTRY

The Religious Education program benefits all of our young people and is dependent on a sense of shared ministry with our faith community. We ask you to seriously consider what commitment you can make of your time and energy towards the program. There will be on-going formation to assist you.

EXPECTATIONS

Parent(s):

Attendance at Religious Education classes is not a substitute for Sunday Mass attendance. You are encouraged to worship together as a family each weekend.

Parents are expected to work with their children, not only by modeling faith, but also by talking about their faith and praying with their children. Parents are expected to review what has been taught in class to help their children learn the subject matter for their grade level. In the Pre-kindergarten program, the children will bring home letters explaining their program. From Kindergarten through Grade 5 there are Family Time pages in the child's text which will help you understand the focus of each lesson. In Middle School, each student receives a schedule/curriculum which indicates the subject and chapter being covered in each session.

Youth:

Youth are encouraged to bring to class a willingness to learn more about themselves and their faith. They are to be open, honest and respectful of their peers, catechists and property. In September all youth are given a folder by their catechists. This will be used to share flyers, messages and/or assignments with the home. Please take a moment to review the materials in your student's folder each week.

Catechists:

Basic to the ministry of Religious Education is the catechist's commitment to a personal faith which is continually deepened by participation in all teacher training/formation opportunities, by personal preparation and readiness for each class session, by faithful attendance and by a commitment to maintaining the content of the curriculum. Open communication with directors and parents is essential to the success of the program.

St. Thomas Staff

Parents, students and catechists can expect that the St. Thomas Staff will do everything it can to ensure that religious education is a positive experience for your student. The St. Thomas Staff will keep lines of communication open and address questions and concerns in a timely manner.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

In order to be effective, the Religious Education Program needs to be strengthened by family participation in the total liturgical, social and educational life of the parish. For this reason, families are to be registered in the parish if the children are attending our program.

2) REGISTRATION INFORMATION

REGISTRATION PACKET

Registration in the Religious Education program is open to any child of a family registered at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish who is four years old (*by September 1*) through High School. Children will be placed in the grade according to their regular school placement.

Registration packets are available on the St. Thomas website, www.stapostle.org, and in the Gathering Area and the Faith Formation office beginning June 1st for the upcoming year. Registration forms should be returned as quickly as possible. Session and class assignments are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Due to the large number of students registering, it is difficult to honor special requests for catechists and/or class assignments.

LATE REGISTRATION

Late registrations make it difficult to arrange for the proper number of catechists, classrooms, textbooks and supplies. REGISTRATIONS RECEIVED AFTER AUGUST 15th MAY NOT BE PROCESSED IN TIME FOR PLACEMENT IN THE FIRST CLASS.

CLASS SIZE

Group sizes for Pre-K and Kindergarten is limited to 8-14 students; Grades 1-5 to 16-20 students and Middle School classes can number up to 20 students.

TUITION FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL

(High School will be a separate tuition and registration.)

By July 1st	1 child - \$120.00	2 children - \$200.00	3 or more - \$260.00
After July 1st	1 child - \$150.00	2 children - \$230.00	3 or more - \$290.00
After Aug. 1st	1 child - \$180.00	2 children - \$260.00	3 or more - \$310.00

(Tuition will be waived for children of catechists)

A deposit of half of the total tuition is required at the time of registration.

The balance of tuition is due on the first day of class. If this is not possible, we would appreciate payment by November 1st.

3) SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States explains that through visible and finite symbols we encounter the invisible presence and infinite holiness of God. Sacraments celebrate God's actions in the life of the community of believers. Preparation for reception of a Sacrament necessitates a two-fold understanding of this communal dimension. The family is the primary community for sacramental preparation for it is within this structure that we first form values and attitudes, and we first encounter intensified support through structured sacramental preparation programs and parish communal celebrations of the Sacraments.

Candidates normally must have satisfactorily completed two (2) consecutive years of Religious Education for preparation for the sacraments. This is a Joliet Diocesan policy. Parent meetings are mandatory for all parents with children being prepared for sacraments. Absence from the parent meetings indicates that you do not wish your child to receive sacraments this year.

4) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

LOCATION

Early Childhood: Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes will meet:
Saturdays, 8:30 - 9:45 a.m., **OR** 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.
at All Saints Catholic Academy, 1155 Aurora Ave. Enter Door #7.

Elementary: Grades 1 - 5 classes will meet either Tuesdays or Saturdays:
Tuesdays, 4:30 - 5:45 p.m. at Brookdale Elementary, 1200 Redfield Rd.
Enter Main Entrance (Door with bell).
Saturday A, 8:30 - 9:45 a.m. **OR** Saturday B, 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.
at All Saints Catholic Academy, 1155 Aurora Ave. Enter Door #7.

Middle School: Grades 6 - 8 classes will meet either Mondays or Saturdays:
Mondays - 7:15 - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday A 8:30 - 9:45 a.m. **OR** **Saturday B** 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.
Enter Door #7 at All Saint's Catholic Academy, 1155 Aurora Ave.

SCHEDULED CLASSES AT CHURCH

Please take special note of classes scheduled at St. Thomas the Apostle. If a child is dropped off at a wrong location, every effort will be made to contact you.

CONDUCT

Learning can best be fostered in an orderly and peaceful environment. This requires full cooperation of students with the catechist. Full cooperation includes:

- listening at appropriate times
- participating willingly in discussions and activities
- having textbooks and other materials at class
- being respectful of property in the buildings we use
- being dressed appropriately at all time; hats and coats are to be removed during class time

Please go over these points with your child/children. They will be reinforced at the first class session.

Unacceptable behavior will first be handled at the catechist level. If the problem persists, the student will meet with the director. If the student must be seen by the director a second time, a phone call will be made to the parent(s). Serious misconduct or concerns will require a parent conference with catechist and director, which must take place before the student returns to class.

ATTENDANCE

Class time is very limited; therefore, you are urged to make regular and prompt attendance a priority in your scheduling. For more accurate record keeping, you are requested to send a verbal or written excuse with your child to the catechist when a class must be missed or an email to the director. (pdougherty@stapostle.org; or pgoralski@stapostle.org)

ARRIVAL/TARDINESS AND/OR PARTIAL ATTENDANCE

Children arriving late for class, or being dismissed early are distracting to the entire group. You are urged to have the children on time for class (approximately five minutes before the assigned time). Children arriving too early for class present a supervision problem. Early dismissals are discouraged. For safety reasons, no child will be allowed to leave the building unattended during class time. Therefore, parents must come into the building and sign out the child for early dismissal.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is very important to the Religious Education Program. The Religious Education Office will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday during the school year. Please direct your questions regarding Religious Education to this office by calling 630-305-6318. We welcome the opportunity to assist you in any way.

Communicating with families will occur through various avenues, such as: flyers, bulletin and pulpit announcements, letters home, email and, at times, personal phone calls by catechists, coordinators and/or directors. If parents have a special concern, they can handle it one of two ways. If the matter pertains to the classroom, the first contact should be made with the catechist. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the next step is to contact the Director.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

For emergency purposes during the school year, we will notify the following stations: WBBM and WGN Radio and WGN-TV.

INFORMATION UPDATE

If during the course of the school year there is a change in the registration information we have on record, please notify the office as soon as possible. If emails, phone numbers, etc. are changed, it becomes impossible to reach parents in case of necessity.

STUDENT SAFETY

Religious Education personnel are required to conform to the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING

All volunteers involved with children must attend the three hour workshop, Protecting God's Children, and fill out the Volunteer Release Form for a background check. Backgrounds of volunteers are evaluated in accordance with all state and federal laws through an agency provided by the Diocese of Joliet and are rechecked every five years. Anyone who has sexually abused will neither be hired nor permitted to volunteer in our parish.

MEDICATIONS

Except in extraordinary circumstances, which must be approved by the Director, personnel will not maintain, administer or supervise the taking of medication.

FIRST AID

State law regulates minor injuries to be treated with soap, water, and band-aides. If there is a serious injury, parents will be notified immediately.

ITEMS TO BE LEFT AT HOME

Valuables, electronic items, entertainment articles, toys, and all food & drinks, etc., must be left at home. Students who bring such items to class will be asked by the Catechist to put them away. A phone call home or a parent conference will be called, if necessary, for those who bring such items to class repeatedly.

5) PARKING PROCEDURES AT BROOKDALE SCHOOL AND ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC ACADEMY

PLEASE NOTE: A map with details will be sent home the first day of class. Please familiarize yourself with the map and the No Parking areas.

Please review procedures carefully. We need parent cooperation to follow instructions to assure the safety of the children as they enter and leave school property. Traffic is frequently congested. We urge all parents to be patient and follow the designated procedures at all times. Use a 5 mph limit on school property.

ENTERING AND EXITING THE BUILDING.

For safety issues, the front door of the school, across from the parking lot at Brookdale will be **the only entrance** to the building. On Saturday morning and Monday nights, at All Saints Academy, the door is marked #7.

Parents, or a designated person, of Pre-K, K, 1st Grade children must enter the building to drop off or pick up their children at their classroom door.

These parents need to park their cars in the school parking lot, or either side of Redfield or Bainbridge Roads, if at Brookdale School. At All Saints use parking lots by Door #7.

Parents dropping off and picking up children who wish to stay in their cars.

Please read carefully. There will be only one line of cars in front of the building, not two, along the school drive. This is to help address the many concerns expressed about safety when cars are pulling around each other in a tight space.

The first car in the school drive must drive all the way to the end with other cars following behind in line. As a child is dropped off or picked up, the car may merge into the traffic lane to the left and exit the drop off area. Also, you must stay in your car at all times for this to work. When volunteers are available to assist with this, you will recognize them by their safety vests or stop signs.

CAR POOL SUGGESTIONS

We suggest your car pool picks a designated spot on the school property to meet drivers who will be waiting in their cars. However - you must exit your car to assist children in crossing at the crosswalks if a volunteer is not available.

6) OTHER SAFETY GUIDELINES

All children in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and 1st grade should be dropped off and picked up at their classroom door. The children will be kept in their rooms until a parent or another designated person comes for them. Please enter the assigned school door and wait in the entrance until classes end. Parents waiting early at the classroom doors distracts the children immensely. We will help monitor the pick-up time by using the school's clock. If you are running late, your child will be brought down to the entrance to wait for you.

Children 2nd grade and older may meet their rides inside or may exit through the assigned door. Please instruct your child(ren) which way you prefer. Parents should arrange a place at the main entrance to meet them.

Some children may need supervision while waiting to be picked up, if so, please call the Faith Formation Office.

7) RAINBOWS

Rainbows is a peer support group system led by trained facilitators for children who are grieving the loss of a loved one due to death, divorce, deployment, incarceration, a long-term illness or another life-altering event. Sessions are on Saturday mornings from 10:15 - 11:15 at St. Thomas the Apostle. For more information, please contact the Faith Formation Office. Be sure to register your child(ren) for Tuesday R.E. or the Saturday 8:30 am session if your child(ren) will be attending Rainbows.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance. Our entire staff looks forward to a year which will help us all to a deeper sense of God's presence in our lives.