



St. Thomas Aquinas

Roman Catholic Church

1400 Suther Road, Charlotte, NC 28213



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK 2017-2018

Name

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

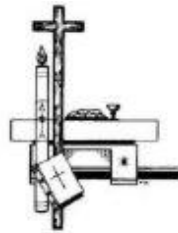
Welcome to a new year of Religious Education at St. Thomas Aquinas! We are happy to have the opportunity to serve you and your children. Our catechists have worked hard to prepare a program that will help the children of our parish grow in the knowledge of their faith and God's love. But remember, this program is not just for your children and their teachers. Real religious education begins in the home, the "domestic church," where by words and example faith is passed on from parents/guardians to their children. I encourage you to talk to your children about the Faith, pray as a family, go to Mass every Sunday and live lives of service beginning in the family and from there, reaching out to others.

I have seen many times how God blesses whole families through their children who are attending Religious Education. Be open to the Holy Spirit and don't be surprised if God touches your heart during this year! I invite you to pray daily with me for your children, their teachers, your families and our parish family.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Holy Family, pray for us.

God Bless,

REV. FATHER PATRICK J. WINSLOW
Pastor, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish



Our Mission

St. Thomas Aquinas Religious Education, drawing on the power of the Holy Eucharist, is grounded in the Good News of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Religious Education program is here to help our families grow in holiness and faith by teaching Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, relying on the Catechism and being obedient to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. With great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary we are led to grow through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit – sharing the faith, loving, and serving others.

Our Vision

St. Thomas Aquinas supports parents as the primary educators of their children. Our Religious Education program seeks to nurture and teach our families to live the Catholic faith through a commitment to Catholic traditions and values. Our program will also foster and empower our students to attain their highest spiritual and creative potential - inspiring all to become informed, caring, and contributing members of our culturally diverse community, beginning in their own homes.

“Amen, Amen I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these.”

John 14:12



Dear Students,

Welcome to St. Thomas Aquinas Religious Education. We are looking forward to a fruitful and rewarding school year with you all.

This handbook will make you aware of our Religious Education program, procedures, and regulations. It includes general guidelines and information you need to know to be a successful student. These rules and regulations are in place to build a truly Christian community atmosphere. Our goal is for you to continue to grow and be strengthened in your Catholic beliefs, faith and trust in God, and know more about God's love for you and for all of us.

Please read this handbook with your parents or guardians so that together we can work harmoniously and facilitate your understanding of our Christian faith. **During the first week of school, please turn in the sheet confirming you have read and agree to the outlined stipulations.**

May this school year be memorable, challenging and full of God's blessings for you and your family.

Sincerely in Christ,

SR. ZENAIDA S. MOFADA, OP
Director, Religious Education



Religious Education Classes

Education in the faith begins at home in the “Domestic Church.” *The parents are the primary educators for their children, especially in the faith.*

St. Thomas Aquinas offers classes for every grade from 1–9, and teens and adults to help foster a growing faith. We also provide opportunities for each person to receive the Sacraments and grow in greater communion with our Lord.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

GRADE LEVEL	DAY	TIME
Grades 1-6	Sunday	8:15-9:15 a.m.
Grades 1-6	Sunday	10:00-11:00 a.m.
Grades 1-5	Wednesday	4:30-5:30 p.m.
Grades 1-6	Wednesday	6:00-7:00 p.m.
<u>Confirmation Prep I & II</u>		
Grades 7-8	Sunday	8:15-9:15 a.m.
Grades 7-8	Sunday	11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Grades 7-8	Sunday	6:30-7:30 p.m.
Grades 7-8	Wednesday	6:00-7:00 p.m.
<u>Confirmation III</u>		
Grade 9	Sunday	6:15-8:00 p.m.
<u>RCIA</u>		
Children Yr 1&Yr 2	Sunday	11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Teens Yr 1 &Yr 2	Sunday	11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: ALL GRADES (1-9)

Religious Education at St. Thomas Aquinas is rooted in Sacred Scripture. It is faithful to the Tradition of the Catholic Church and guided by the Holy Spirit. Our program is centered on the Person of Jesus Christ, inviting relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This program encourages a living faith within the Domestic and Universal Church. Built and grounded on the four pillars of the Catholic faith (Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Commandments, and Prayer) our program uses the 6 tasks of catechesis which are to promote: knowledge of the Faith, Liturgy and Sacraments, Morality, Prayer, Community & Mission of the Church, and how to be active Christian members of society.

Catholic School & Home School Students

Catholic School and Home School students do not need to attend Religious Education classes since they are receiving daily faith instruction at their Catholic school or at home. **However, for Home School students in sacramental years, (First Communion and Confirmation), parents need to submit their sacramental preparation curriculum for approval from the pastor. Parents are still asked to attend *all* Sacramental Preparation meetings.** Both Catholic School and Home School students need to register during sacramental years. It is required that Catholic School/Home School students attend the special activities for the preparation of these specific sacraments (including retreats, if offered, and practices). Students will also complete any particular service projects and attend Sunday Mass.

Independent Study Program

The Independent Study Program is available for religious education students in grades 1 and 3-7. The Religious Education Office will provide the family with online courses to be used throughout the year and will keep parents informed of the target dates for course completion. Students are required to attend extra Religious Education activities throughout the year to join in our community. A schedule of events will be sent via email with

further instructions. Students will also complete any particular service projects and attend Sunday Masses.

Prayer is essential for the Catholic family life – particularly in the formation of young people. With this in mind, it is expected that parents will do everything possible to participate in the liturgical and devotional life of the parish – especially by attending Sunday Mass weekly.

Sacramental Preparation

Preparing for the reception of a sacrament is a time of great reflection and meaning. It is a special time in the life of a family.

First Penance & First Holy Communion

First Penance precedes the reception of First Holy Communion to prepare our bodies and souls for the reception of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord. First Penance and First Holy Communion are celebrated in Second Grade, at the end of the two-year preparation program.



Regular attendance at Mass each week and participation in all First Penance and First Holy Communion special activities are requested.

Other requirements include:

- **Baptism – a copy of the certificate should be submitted with the registration form**
- Parents are asked to attend meetings regarding the Sacraments
- Attendance at all practices in preparation for the Sacrament
- Mastery of the Following Prayers: The “Our Father”, “Hail Mary”, “Glory Be”, “Act of Contrition”, “Prayer to Saint Michael”; and also, the Mass responses
- One Service Project
- Communion Dress Code

Confirmation Preparation

Confirmation at St. Thomas Aquinas is a 2½ year preparation program. It is available to students beginning in 7th grade with Confirmation Prep I, continuing with 8th grade Confirmation Prep II. In 9th grade, students participate in a 6-week Confirmation III program, making final preparations to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the fall.

Other requirements include:

- **Baptism, Penance, & Communion – a copy of the certificate should be submitted with the registration form**
- Regular Attendance at all Religious Education classes for 7th through 9th grade
- Parents are asked to attend all meetings regarding the Sacramental Preparation
- Attendance at all practices in preparation for the Sacrament
- Mastery of the following Prayers (in addition to Communion Preparation prayers): The Creed & the Anima Christi

Throughout the process students:

- Choose a Confirmation Sponsor
 - o To be eligible a sponsor must be
 - o at least 16 years old (and have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation)
 - o not the candidate's parent/guardian
 - o a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church (A letter is required from their parish attesting to these facts)
- Choose a Confirmation Saint (selected during 8th grade, with submission of a Saint Report to the Class Catechist).
- Service Projects (3 per year for 7th and 8th grades; as scheduled and announced for 9th grade)
- Middle & High School Youth Group Attendance (at least 4 sessions per year for 7th and 8th grades)

RCIA I & II Adapted for Children

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children is for students ages 8–12 years. It is a two-year program of instruction from the Catechism of the Catholic Church for those children who are **unbaptized and/or uncatechized** (those students who have not attended consecutive grade level Religious Education classes and missed formal instruction in the faith.)

RCIA Adapted for Children prepares students to become fully initiated members of the Catholic Church. This is a parent/child interactive class that includes weekly classes, participation in all sacramental preparation activities. The program is designed to allow families to grow in faith together.

RCIA I & II Adapted for Teens

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Teens is the same as for children, but geared toward **unbaptized youth**, ages 13–16 years. This class has minimal parent interaction and includes weekly classes and participation in all sacramental prep activities.

RCIA – Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a special program for adults who want to become full members of the Catholic Faith. It prepares adults for the completion of all Sacraments. For more information on this program please contact the Parochial Vicar (704) 549-1607, ext. 208.

For More Information on Adult Formation Activities please visit our website at www.stcharlotte.com

SERVICE PROJECTS

Beginning in 1st grade, students are asked to participate and share their talents and gifts by serving others. This means helping the first community - the family, then the parish family, and then the outside community. It is important to understand that service projects are not simply requirements for class activities, but that service is part of being the working Body of Christ. The experiences gained are invaluable and help all people to grow stronger in their faith by sharing what they believe and live. This is one way to experience the joy & peace that only comes from Christ the Savior.

Each student (1st grade – 9th grade) is asked to participate in Group Projects as well as Individual Project(s). All service should be done on a volunteer basis and not paid. If the recipient insists on paying, choose a charity to donate the funds. A project is defined by an activity that serves the community (outside your home). A project may take anywhere from 1 hour to 4 hours, depending on the type of service. The intention is for the students to seek something that interests them and makes a difference in the community. Projects should happen within the current school year. **On-going activities such as ushering, being a member of the choir, and altar serving are excellent choices!**

Service Project Guidelines:

<u>Grade level</u>		<u># Projects</u>
1 st - 4 th	-	2 projects per year
5 th - 8 th	-	3 projects per year
9 th	-	as scheduled and announced

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Religious Education classes are **offered only to parishioners of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church.** To register with the parish, please contact the Parish Office at 704-549-1607 or download the application at www.stacharlotte.com.
2. **All students should have a copy of their Baptismal Certificate submitted to the office.**
3. Attendance at all classes is ideal but we understand when family events or illness come up. Students are allowed 3 excused absences per year except for 9th grade. We ask that Parents keep the catechist informed that their children will be out and upon their return have all their work made up.
4. Students are asked to be in their classrooms five minutes before the scheduled time so class can begin on time.
5. Students should always come prepared. They bring their book, folder, and homework to class each week unless otherwise advised.
6. Students must be respectful at all times.
7. **Parents/Guardians are asked to teach by example and participate in all Sunday Masses and Holy Days of Obligation. This is a great way to demonstrate living the Faith.**
8. Parents/Guardians/Carpool- Adults **must drop-off and pick up students at the classroom door** for grades 1 – 6. This is for the child's safety, as well as an opportunity for parents to keep in communication with the catechists about what is happening in class. If someone else will be picking up your child, please inform the catechist in writing.
9. St. Thomas Aquinas Religious Education follows the CMS Schools closings for **inclement weather.**
10. **Subscribe to “remind” to get text updates for STA RE class cancellation and changes.**
11. Any changes to the calendar or schedule will be announced.
12. Refer all concerns, questions, and comments about Religious Education to the Director of Religious Education (DRE) office. This is to ensure that communication and all programs can be improved and flow smoothly.

DISCIPLINE & EXPECTATIONS

Our goal is to provide a positive atmosphere where teaching, sharing and learning can take place. At any time a Catechist feels that a student has seriously violated the “Behavior Expectations”, that student will be removed from the classroom setting and sent to the DRE’s office.

Behavior Expectations

Students should:

- listen and follow directions and refrain from disruptive behavior. Remember and imitate Christ.
- dress and behave reverently while in Church.
- walk, while in the classroom and hallways.
- treat Religious Education family members, fellow students, the Church buildings, properties, and grounds with respect.
- refrain from use of cell phones or other electronic devices in class.
- clean as they go leaving the classroom or the hall ready for the next class.

For Disruptive Behavior

Students will be sent to the DRE’s office to deal with the issues such behavior causes during Religious Education class. Parents/guardians will be notified of all behavior issues including a possible meeting with parents, DRE and Pastor.

BASIC PRAYERS

The Our Father

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us
our trespasses as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

The Act of Contrition

*My God, I am sorry for my sins
with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good, I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend,
with your help, to do penance, to sin no more
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin,
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.*

Hail Mary

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed are thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

Glory Be

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

Anima Christi

*soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me; Water from the side of Christ, wash
me; Passion of Christ, strengthen me;
O good Jesus, hear me; within your wounds hide me;
separated from you, let me never be; from the evil one protect me;
at the hour of my death, call me;
and close to you bid me; that with your Saints, I may be,
praising you forever and ever. Amen.*

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

*Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our
defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O
Prince of the Heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into Hell
Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

A Prayer for Parents

*Into your hands, Lord, I entrust my child
Today was one of those perfect days
when I knew I was doing it all right
and it feels good to be a parent.
Today, I was able to kiss the hurt away.
Today I had the answers to the questions,
And the time to share the wonder.
Today I saw you shining in the eyes of my child,
Today, I think he/she found you in mine.
Thank you for a good day.
Help me to remember
that a good day is not a good life,
that you made the perfect gift for perfect parents . . .
Tomorrow. Amen.*

IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE

CLASSES BEGIN:

September 6, 2017 - Wednesday classes

September 10, 2017 - Sunday classes

- Independent Study Program

NO CLASSES:

October 15, 2017 - World Feast Clean up

December 17th, 2017 through January 3rd, 2018- Christmas Break

February 14th, 2018 - Ash Wednesday

March 25th through 31st, 2018 - Holy Week

April 1st through 7th, 2018 - Easter Break

SACRAMENTAL DATES:

November 8th, 2017 @ 6:00 p.m. – Confirmation

February 24th, 2018 @ 11:00 a.m. – First Penance Service

MAY 5th, 2018 @ 10:00 a.m. – First Holy Communion

CLASSES END:

April 29th, 2018 - Sunday classes

- Independent Study Program

May 2nd, 2018 - Wednesday classes

The most up-to-date information can be found by visiting

www.stacharlotte.com/RE

Office phone number: (704) 549-0199

Email dre@stacharlotte.com