

***Faith Formation
Handbook
for
Parents***



St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church
80 Saint Thomas Way
Montevallo, AL 35115
(205) 663-3936

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Policies and Guidelines

Registration

Every child is expected to be registered each year. The times for registration will be listed in the bulletin as well as listed in the Faith Formation Calendar. The registration form can be completed online, or if you prefer to complete the form on paper, come to our main office during office hours. If your child has not been baptized at St. Thomas, a **baptismal certificate** is required at the time of registration or before the first class.

Fees

\$75 for 1 student, plus \$25 for each student after. Instructions regarding payment can be found in the online registration form.

Parish Membership

Each family is required to be a registered parishioner at Saint Thomas. This registration can be completed online, and is also available as a paper form (visit the main office during office hours).

Attendance

Each student is expected to be present for all sessions unless except in cases of illness or other emergency. Please notify the parish office of any illness or emergency that prevents attendance. Class time is from 9:30 AM to 10:45 AM on Sundays. Children in 1st Grade are to remain in class until a family member comes. Parents are encouraged to participate in all sessions and to assist with work at home.

Contact Information

Parents are encouraged to contact the appropriate catechist for any concerns regarding their specific class. For other general concerns about classes, please contact the Faith Formation director, Magda Rivera.

Classroom and Behavioral Guidelines

Students may not be in the classroom without supervision. Parents will be notified by catechist of behavioral problems. Should it be necessary, the director, catechist, parents and child will meet to review any concerns.

Parents are welcome to attend sessions with the student. Parental participation is always encouraged. Parents are also encouraged to discuss the topics of each class and to help with activities and prayers.

Student Resources

The publisher Loyola Press is used for grades 1-8, and the publisher St. Mary's Press is used for Confirmation I and Confirmation II classes.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, Faith Formation classes may be cancelled for safety reasons. On the Faith Formation registration form, if you provide a cell phone number and opt-in to receiving important updates via text, we will notify you of any class cancellation.

Retreats

The students in Confirmation I and Confirmation II classes are required to attend the annual retreats. Additional information will be provided to the students and parents in each class.

Sacramental Preparation Guidelines

General Guidelines

Sacramental Preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation require a two-year process. Parents are required to attend a Parent Sacramental Preparation meeting before their children may receive these sacraments.

First Reconciliation

Diocesan Policy requires that reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede the reception of First Eucharist.

The student who will receive First Reconciliation must understand the nature of sin, the mercy of God, and the need for repentance when one has sinned.

The student who will receive First Reconciliation must have been instructed in conscience formation, must know the process of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and must know an Act of Contrition by memory.

First Reconciliation is usually celebrated on a Saturday morning in the fall, often in the month of November. Please consult the Faith Formation Calendar for the date.

First Eucharist

The student who will receive First Eucharist must understand at the appropriate level the nature of the Paschal Mystery – which is salvation comes through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The student must know the historical event of the Last Supper and understand its meaning at an appropriate level.

The student who will receive First Eucharist must know that the consecrated host is different from ordinary bread or from an unconsecrated host, and that the consecrated wine is different from ordinary wine. The student who will receive First Eucharist must know that what appears to be bread and wine is actually the real body and blood of Christ.

First Eucharist is usually celebrated on a Sunday in the spring, often in the month of May. Please consult the Faith Formation Calendar for the date.

Confirmation

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a two year program at St. Thomas. The Confirmation candidate must understand that the Sacrament of Confirmation confers the fullness of the Holy Spirit:

- Confirmation seals us permanently in our relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Confirmation increases the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in us.
- Confirmation makes our bond with the Church deeper and more mature.
- Confirmation gives us the special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly.

A **sponsor** for Confirmation **must** be:

- A practicing Catholic
- Confirmed
- At least 16 years of age
- A model for the confirmation candidate
- **NOT** a parent of the confirmation candidate

Since notification of the reception of the sacrament must be sent to the church where the child was baptized, **a certificate of Baptism must be provided.**

Candidates are given the option of using their baptismal name or choosing another saint's name for Confirmation. In either case, they should research the life of the saint so that the chosen name can have special meaning and importance in their lives.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is usually celebrated at the Saturday 5:30 PM Mass in the Spring; however, the exact date and time may vary from year to year. The schedule is finalized well in advance of the ceremony, and Confirmation students and their parents will be informed as soon as it is decided.