



*St. Thomas More Parish
Appleton, WI*

Faith Formation Handbook

Faith Formation Office:

920-739-8172

Faith Formation Personnel

Pastor

Father Jim Lucas
fr.jim@stmccath.org

Child Ministry

P/S-Grade 5
Sacraments: Eucharist & Reconciliation
Emily Shackleton, Coordinator
emily@stmccath.org

Youth Ministry

Grades 6-12
Laurie Overesch, Primary Coordinator
laurie@stmccath.org

Young Adult Ministry

Sacrament: Confirmation (Grade 11 or 12)
Anna Donnermeyer, Coordinator
anna@stmccath.org

Adult Ministry

Anita Revord, Director of Missionary Discipleship
anita@stmccath.org

Administrative Assistant

Wendy Fischer
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Faith Formation Office Hours and Contact Information

Office Phone: 739-8172

Office Hours: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm (M, T, Th)
2:00 pm - 8:30 pm (W)

Summer hours by appointment

Website: www.stmccath.org

Mission Statement

We, the faith community of St. Thomas More, affirm our commitment to our Lord and brother, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. We center on the Eucharist and the embodiment of Catholic family values. We commit to love of neighbor, hospitality and compassion, nurturing and enrichment, empathy and social justice, emphasizing the contemporary needs of the church and the poor.

General Information

This booklet has been published to provide a comprehensive view of the ministry programs at St. Thomas More Parish. These programs serve both the St. Francis Xavier Catholic School System and Faith Formation populations. In striving to offer the best possible program for St. Thomas More Parish, the following three elements are stressed:

1. The message of Jesus Christ.
2. Membership in our Catholic Community through our common faith.
3. Service to others both within and beyond St. Thomas More Parish as a way to develop and use our God-given talents and live as Disciples of Christ.

Catholic Education Commission

The Catholic Education Commission is responsible for the total faith formation program of the STM Parish. They initiate policies and set guidelines for/with the Child, Youth, Young Adult and Adult Ministry Coordinators so the programs can accomplish their goals. The Catholic Education Commission reports directly to the STM Parish Pastoral Council.

Parental Role

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children." (#2223) Since you have such an impact on your child(ren)'s faith life, we ask that you support their discipleship development by:

- Participating in the celebration of Eucharist with your child(ren) each weekend.
- Including prayer as a part of their daily routine.
- Encouraging regular participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Encouraging them to take a more active role in the parish's life and ministry, in keeping with their age and abilities (serving, ushering, music, etc).

Homework and Extracurricular Activities (Appleton Area School District Policy #345.3)

There is both a written policy (for homework) and an informal agreement (for extracurricular activities) to reserve Wednesday evenings for family activities and Faith Formation in the Appleton Area School District. As a commitment to community life and in cooperation with community groups and religious educators, the Appleton Area School District makes every attempt not to schedule extracurricular events on Wednesday evenings. This is done so that students and families can be involved in non-school activities on Wednesday evenings. This agreement is a combined effort by Appleton schools and the churches to help families prioritize the value of faith formation. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact the Appleton Area School District at 832-6161 or the St. Thomas More Faith Formation Office at 739-8172.

Attendance

Attendance is the responsibility of parents. Students are expected to be at classes on time so they can begin promptly. Consult the calendars for dates and times of classes. Calendars can be found at www.stmcath.org by hovering over *Child & Youth*, click on *Faith Formation*, then scroll to the bottom to click on *Calendars*.

Catholic Education Commission Policy on Regular Attendance for Faith Formation Classes:

Attendance at all scheduled Faith Formation classes by students in Grades 1-11 is a prerequisite for participation in sacramental programs - Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation.

Exceptions to this will be handled by the Coordinators of Child and Youth Ministry and the pastor.

Please call or email all absences. If we don't receive a call or email, the administrative assistant might call parents and inform them of their child's absence.

Classes missed for any reason are expected to be made up by the students (see Make Up Work). Contact your child's catechist to make arrangements. Students who need to leave early must report to the Welcome Center. Parents must sign their child out. At no time will students be released without an adult.

Website

Please go to www.stmcath.org to access our calendars and Faith Formation information. Any class cancelations will also be posted on the home page in the scrolling banner.

Catechist - Parent Cooperation

Efforts will be made throughout the year by the pastor, coordinators, catechists and Catholic Education Commission to keep you informed of our goals and efforts. We ask that this contact become mutual communication. The best way to know "what's going on" is not only to ask your student, but to read the church bulletin, check the website, www.stmcath.org, or come and ask those involved. If you have any doubts, questions, or comments, please feel free to contact the Child and Youth Ministry Coordinators.

Communication Devices

Cell phones and electronic gear (such as but not limited to MP3 players, video games, IPODs, PDAs) are a source of distraction during class time - for this reason, their use is not permitted during Faith Formation classes. Cell phones and all electronic gear need to be turned off before the opening prayer in class and must be put away until dismissal. If a student cannot conform to this rule - the catechist will ask for the cell phone/electronic gear and the parent will need to claim it at the end of class.

Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Code

The Diocese of Green Bay will not tolerate the sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor by a priest, deacon, other minister, employee or volunteer who is in the service of the Diocese. Likewise, all students are expected to be respectful of all others they come in contact with. Any sexual harassment or misconduct will NOT be tolerated and a student suspected of such behavior will be immediately asked to leave and parents will be contacted.

VIRTUS - "Protecting God's Children" (Preventing Child Abuse Awareness)

Each volunteer and employee of the Green Bay Diocese eighteen years old or older who have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults are to participate in a "Protecting God's Children Adult Awareness" (VIRTUS) session which the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocesan Department of Total Catholic Education mandates.

Regular contact is defined as any volunteer who has contact with children/youth/vulnerable adults and encounters said person(s) more than four (4) times in a program year and/or acts as a chaperone on an overnight event and/or is the sole adult driver in a vehicle transporting said person(s) and/or spends an average of one (1) or more hour(s) a week in any given four week period with said person(s) and/or is not under the direct/immediate supervision of a parish/educational/catechetical employee.

There are VIRTUS sessions available throughout the year at different locations throughout the Diocese of Green Bay which any volunteer or employee can attend. No volunteer can work with children in the religious education area if he/she refuses to attend.

* Legal Reference: Wisconsin Statutes s.48.981 (2) (3) (4)

In accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Statement on "Protecting God's Children", each grade level, Pre-K through high school, will receive 1-3 hours of education in abuse recognition, prevention, and other moral issues every year.

GBDB 5060: "Since parish, school, and religious education personnel are in a unique position to observe and identify potential cases of abused and/or neglected children, responsible action by school employees and religious education personnel and catechists can be achieved through recognition and understanding of the problem, knowing the reporting procedures and acting accordingly as specified by state law. We are required to follow the requirements of civil law and the guidelines of the Department of Education. Such guidelines should make staff personnel aware that by state statute we are immune from civil and/or criminal liability when reporting suspected child abuse cases. Failure to report may result in legal action which may include a fine, imprisonment, or both."

Discipline Expectations

There is only one classroom rule in our St. Thomas More Discipline Plan. Students will show respect in both actions and words for the catechists, aides, other students, building, classrooms and all classroom items, including the property of the teacher and other students who use the classroom, and the program as a whole during class time and at all parish sponsored activities on and off parish premises.

This plan will:

- Promote the well-being and safety of all students and staff.
- Protect the right of every catechist to teach and every student to learn.
- Maintain the dignity, worth, sacredness, and value of each person.
- Include appropriate and timely communications with parents.
- Foster personal responsibility and accountability of actions by students and staff.
- Exemplify Gospel values particularly that of love.

Students are expected to show respect for the catechists, other students, and the program as a whole during class time and at all parish sponsored activities on and off parish premises.

Discipline Plan

The following procedure will be implemented if a student violates any classroom rules:

1. The first offense will result in a verbal reminder from the Catechist.
2. The second offense will result in the child staying after class for five minutes and meeting with the Coordinator.
3. For the third offense, the child, accompanied by the Coordinator, will phone his/her parents to let them know that he/she has misbehaved and will be staying after class for an extended time.
4. If the problem persists, the student will be suspended from classes or from the entire program until the parents and child meet with the Coordinator and can guarantee that the problem has been resolved.

Drop Off/Pick Up Procedure

Please exercise caution when dropping off or picking up your son/daughter on class nights. For the student's safety, hallway supervision begins 10 minutes before classes. Students should not be dropped off prior to this time.

Drop Off Grades 1-5:

- Students may be dropped off in the circle-drop-off area.
- Students should report to the lower level upon entering the building.
- Students who are late must check in with the Welcome Center Volunteer.

Pick Up Grades 1-5:

- Parents, for the safety of your child(ren), we recommend that you come inside the building to pick-up your child(ren) after classes finish at 7:30 PM in the first floor hallway.

Drop Off Grades 6-high school:

- Students should gather in the first floor hallway 10 minutes before class begins.
- Students who are late must check in with the Welcome Center Volunteer.
- Student drivers are expected to drive cautiously.

Pick Up Grades 6-high school:

- Students in grades 6-11 will be dismissed at 7:30 PM.
- Student drivers are expected to drive cautiously, especially when backing up.

Make Up Work

If a child cannot attend class because of sickness or another valid reason, s/he is expected to make up the class. Catechists will assign make up work based on what was taught the night of the absence. This work should be completed and turned into the catechist in a timely manner.

Personal or Health Concerns

Information about learning disabilities or other personal concerns should be communicated on the student's registration form. This will allow for the student and the catechist to develop a healthier relationship and provide for protection against harmful reactions in classes. We want to be able to minister to each student as his/her individual needs require.

Student Dress

Students shall wear clothing appropriate to the learning environment of a church community or a parish sponsored event. Hats and coats are removed during class. Garments which advertise or promote values contrary to the message of Jesus are not acceptable.

Supervision

For the student's safety, hallway supervision begins 10 minutes before classes. Since all classes end at 7:30 PM, there will be no after-class supervision.

Tuition/Fees

Consult the website for tuition and fees found on the registration form (www.stmcath.org) or contact the Faith Formation Department. **In case of financial need, scholarship assistance will be available to those who apply.

Smoking

Smoking, alcohol and drugs, are prohibited by law for minor children under the age of 18, and they are forbidden by both Diocesan and St. Thomas More policies.

Weapons

No one shall possess, use, threaten, or store a weapon or lookalike weapon on parish property or on parish sponsored events. Weapons are defined as anything that could cause bodily harm, property damage, or intimidation. Students in possession or reasonably suspected of being in possession may be subjected to search and seizure. Such an effort would be done in the presence of an adult witness. The police may be notified depending upon the results of the search. Parents will always be notified that such an event has occurred.

Program Overview

Child Ministry Preschool-Grade 5

Our Program Offerings Include:

Sunday Morning P/S and Kindergarten (Children 3-5 yrs)

The Sunday morning preschool and kindergarten program uses many resources to provide an extraordinary opportunity for children to gather in Christ's name. Biblically-based videos, books, stories, crafts and games provide the children with many experiences focusing on the New and Old Testament. The hands-on activities, including poems, finger plays, and songs help the preschooler and kindergarten student work toward developing a dwelling place in which God is ever present. Children meet most Sundays during the 10:00 AM Mass beginning in October through Palm Sunday.

Grade 1

The first grader will be introduced to some of the basic principles of our Catholic faith. The introduction of the Blessed Trinity, exploration of the Sunday worship experience, and presentation of scripture stories to introduce the beginnings of the Church are the key concepts taught in grade one.

Grade 2

The second grader will be introduced to some of the basic teachings about the sacramental life of the Catholic Church with an emphasis on Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist as s/he discovers what it means to belong to the Christian Community.

Family preparation for the reception of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is done in grade 2 (see required elements on next page).

Grade 3

The focus for grade three is the Church as both a sacramental community and a servant community. The mission, message, prayer, and actions of God's family will be explored through an introductory study of all seven sacraments. Basic concepts of social justice are introduced.

Grade 4

Fourth graders learn about the Church's rich tradition of moral example and teaching which reinforces the Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The focus is on the Ten Commandments, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Beatitudes of Jesus, and the sacraments.

Grade 5

Grade 5 focuses on an in-depth study of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. The students learn that the Church is the sacrament or sign of Christ in the world. They will come to appreciate the difference Jesus makes in their lives.

Monthly Family Program

(Grades 1-5 & their Parents/Guardians)

Themes vary by year. Classes meet on the third Sunday of every month from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM during the school year. Students receive a textbook, along with a reading guide to work through with their families at home. They are expected to complete all chapters assigned by the end of the Family Program in order to move to the next grade level.

Sunday themes and activities will involve the entire family and encourage families to grow deeper in their faith and in their ability to discuss their faith with one another.

Required Elements of Sacramental Preparation (Grade 2)

First Reconciliation:

1. Textbook and materials provided by the Coordinator of Child Ministry.
2. Parent/child classes and Enrollment Mass.
3. Parental/family involvement in the preparation.
4. Parent/guardian and child attendance at Reconciliation Retreat.
5. Child attendance at the Rite of Reconciliation with individual confessions.
6. Parent and/or family in attendance at the Rite of Reconciliation.

First Holy Communion:

1. Textbook and materials provided by the Coordinator of Child Ministry.
2. Parent/child classes and Enrollment Mass.
3. Parental/family involvement in the preparation.
4. Child attendance at First Communion Retreat with one parent or guardian.
5. Attendance at classes and Sunday Liturgies.
6. Attendance at First Communion Practice Saturday before child's Communion.
7. Attendance at First Communion Liturgy (either Saturday at 5:00 PM or Sunday at 10:00 AM and arriving at least 15 minutes prior to the start of Mass).

Catholic Education Commission Policy on Sacraments

All students enrolled in a religion class from the St. Francis Xavier Catholic School System or Faith Formation Program are to participate in all sacramental programs as set by the curriculum of the Faith Formation Department of St. Thomas More Parish. Sacraments are to be celebrated as a parish faith community. Exceptions will be made only by the pastor, faith formation coordinators and/or principal.

*Children must have completed one year of faith formation (or religion class in Catholic school) prior to registering for sacrament preparation. Children attend faith formation classes regularly (or attend religion classes regularly in Catholic school) for grade two throughout the year in addition to their sacrament preparation. If your child has not completed one year of faith formation or the equivalent, please contact the Faith Formation Office for a personalized arrangement.

** *If your child has not received First Reconciliation and/or First Holy Communion and is older than grade 2, please contact the Faith Formation Office for a personalized arrangement.*

Youth Ministry Grades 6–12

A national study, "New Directions in Youth Ministry," documented that "adolescents who participate in parish youth ministry identify faith and moral formation as a significant contribution to their life, have a profound sense of commitment to the Catholic Church, attend Sunday Mass regularly, and show continued growth while they remain involved in youth programs. These are positive signs that the Church's investment in ministry with adolescents is making a difference in their lives and in the life of the Church."

St. Thomas More Parish is committed to youth and families to work in partnership to form disciples. The requirements for grades 6-Confirmation help provide a well-balanced program to encourage personal and spiritual growth. The comprehensive model of youth ministry is grounded in the mission of Jesus and the Church, directed toward growth in Christian discipleship, and guided by three goals which are:

- GOAL 1 - To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
- GOAL 2 - To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.
- GOAL 3 - To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Youth Ministry incorporates the following eight ministry components, all of which are included in the Youth Ministry Program at St. Thomas More: **ADVOCACY, CATECHESIS, COMMUNITY LIFE, EVANGELIZATION, JUSTICE & SERVICE, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, PASTORAL CARE, PRAYER & SERVICE.**

Youth Ministry is one of many ministries within the life of a parish. Other segments of the parish are wonderful resources and role models for youth as together they strive to serve each other and God. Mutual dialogue and support is essential.

Choose to act now, and be assured of a bright future for our Church, with the youth of today becoming the leaders of tomorrow!

Grade 6

The sixth grade curriculum is based upon the roots of our faith found in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. God is presented as the one who creates out of love and who cares deeply about the world. Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Students are also required to attend a retreat.

Grades 7–11

The educational program for grades 7-11 provides a well-balanced curriculum to encourage personal & spiritual growth, and to lay a solid faith foundation. It is the Church's responsibility to provide teens with information about their faith, as well as a strong understanding of Catholic morals and values so that they are well-equipped to live as disciples of Christ.

Classes

Course content focuses on teaching the youth to live as disciples of Christ. Topics taught include: the Old and New Testament, the Church and its history, prayer, morality and social justice. As stated in this handbook, "Classes missed for any reason are expected to be made up by the students." Make-up work will be provided.

Mercy Experiences (Service Hours) for students in Grades 7-11

Works of Mercy

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs: counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead

Serving others helps us to not only hear what the Gospel of Jesus says, it helps us to live it out. It is in living the Gospel that we can really begin to understand Jesus. Students in grades 7-Confirmation are required to complete a minimum of 2 hours of parish experiences and 2 hours of community experiences each school year (all 5 years). Serving others is a way of life, and is encouraged beyond the program requirements. If a student completes more than the minimum requirement, the hours will be kept on file, but are not held over for the next year. It is important that teens experience mercy experiences at the different age levels as they mature. Mercy Experience opportunities are regularly posted in the bulletin "Youth Ministry" section, on the website www.stmcath.org, in class, and by email.

Class Retreats

Retreats provide an opportunity for building community, sharing faith and spending time away with our Lord. The extended time on retreat is valuable for youth to reflect on their relationship with God, others and self. Students in grades 6-8 will attend a retreat chosen by the coordinator each year. Students in high school are able to select a retreat from several options. Each year high school students are to choose a different retreat to broaden their horizon.

Confirmation (Grade 11 or 12)

St. Thomas More Confirmation Preparation follows the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' recommendations as expressed in their 1997 document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. The following components of our preparation program are direct responses to the bishops' pastoral call. Our ultimate goals, as indicated by the global Catholic Church, are to empower young people to live as disciples of Christ, to draw young people to participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community, and to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person. St. Thomas More's Confirmation Preparation consists of these main components:

Classes

Due to the design of our program, students must be current in all their service requirements before beginning the Confirmation classes in the fall. Students must also attend all classes.

Retreat

Candidates are required to attend the Confirmation Retreat. We ask that schedules be arranged to make this possible. If the retreat is missed, candidates must attend another approved make-up retreat within the time frame of this program.

Service Hours

By the time of Confirmation, candidates are required to have completed a minimum of ten hours of parish service experiences AND ten hours of community service experiences.

Sponsor/Candidate Meetings

Candidates and their sponsors should meet on a regular basis. Meeting topics will be provided. It is suggested that there be at least four meetings. Candidate/sponsor work will be discussed at the candidate's final interview before Confirmation.

Duties of the Sponsor

1. To help the candidate discover the implication of the Gospel in his/her life and in society.
2. To help the candidate deal with any doubts or anxieties regarding faith.
3. To supervise the candidate's preparation, seeing to it that he/she attends the classes and fulfills the other obligations related to the preparation.
4. To testify, by recommending the candidate for Confirmation, concerning the sincerity and efforts of the candidate in preparing for Confirmation.
5. To provide a good example.
6. To participate in the Sacramental Celebration.

Pastoral Care

As Faith Formation coordinators, we are ready to walk with families, children, youth and adults in any life situations that they face. We offer support and resources during difficult times, celebration during happy times, and everything in between! Other staff, such as our parish nurse, our deacons and our priests are here to support in a deeper way at times of death or extreme circumstances. The Parish Office can be reached at 739-7758 or stmparish@stmccath.org.

Young Adult Ministry

In addition to the other adult opportunities (see the "Adult Ministry" section of this handbook) provided by St. Thomas More Parish, we also minister to Young Adults in our community. The diocesan definition of "Young Adult" includes all people ages 18-39. Our STM parish website has a Young Adult page which is kept up-to-date with a wide variety of opportunities. Ongoing Young Adult Ministry includes:

- Sending care packages to recent high school graduates.
- Activities for college-aged young adults over Christmas and Spring Breaks.
- Mom's Group/Little Saints Play Group (also on Facebook).
- Women's Faith Sharing Group and other small groups.
- Diocesan young adult opportunities.
- Marriage Preparation.
- Elizabeth Ministry.
- Baptismal Anniversary Mailings.
- Monthly Date Nights for married and engaged couples.

Adult Ministry

St. Thomas More Adult Opportunities:

Our parish stresses liturgy (culminating in the Eucharist) as the main source of spiritual growth. Open-hearted participation in the liturgy of the parish can give insight and strength for genuine daily living.

Other spiritual nourishment is needed as well. Some of the options available are:

- Alpha--Explore life and faith in a friendly environment.
- Scripture study groups meet weekly from September through May and some seasonally.
- Speakers, videos, presentations, programs and discussions are offered to explore topics of interest each year.
- Morning Mass, liturgy of the hours, and rosary are prayed together throughout the week.
- Our library of spiritual and practical books, videos, audio tracks, and magazines addresses many areas of interest. Parishioners are invited to check out materials or donate to the collection.
- Book clubs meet and discuss literature in light of faith.
- CHR (Christ Renews His Parish) weekends for faith and relationship rejuvenation are offered.
- Books, materials and videos are available during liturgical seasons.
- Seniors, widows and widowers gather several times annually.
- Our website gives inspirational and educational information and provides links to other spiritual information.

- Pilgrimages, retreat days and days of recollection are offered in the area for parishioners to attend.
- The Compass is our diocesan newspaper. Copies are available and subscriptions are encouraged for personal faith formation.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)

We welcome and support those who wish to become full members of the Catholic faith and anyone interested in learning more about their faith. The process of initiation for adults may include some teens and older children and is concerned with the total formation of the person in the Catholic community's prayer, service and action. This gradual faith development culminates in the rites and celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Please contact the Faith Formation office for the current schedule (739-8172).

Appleton City-Wide Adult Education Committee - ACAEC

A city-wide program of Adult Education and Faith Development is planned each year by representatives from the parishes in Appleton. Financially and realistically, this common thrust has been a much more practical approach to Adult Education. It avoids duplication and gives us a better chance of providing quality speakers in the area.