

*Faith Formation  
Handbook  
For  
Parents*



St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church  
Montevallo, Alabama

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St. Thomas The Apostle  
Catholic Church  
80 St. Thomas Way  
Montevallo, AL 35115

Dear Parents,

For the parents who are registering your child or children in the St. Thomas Faith Formation program for the first time, welcome!

For the parents who have been registering your child or children in the St. Thomas Faith Formation program for many years, welcome back!

Parents have the primary responsibility to educate their children in the faith. We are happy that you have accepted this responsibility with your children. The St. Thomas Faith Formation Team seeks to assist you in this wonderful opportunity.

I am confident that you will give your full cooperation to Pat Shoop, our Director of Faith Formation, and to all the Faith Formation Team.

Your example in the home is a very important part of the religious education of your child. Your faith and your spirit of prayer will help your child to grow spiritually. Your weekly attendance at Mass is an essential part of the religious education of your children.

I wish to thank you for your past cooperation, and I look forward to working with you for the spiritual growth of your children.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond A. Dunmyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Reverend Raymond A. Dunmyer

Pastor

St. Thomas the Apostle  
Catholic Church  
80 St. Thomas Way  
Montevallo, AL 35115

Dear Parents,

The new Faith Formation (FF) year is here. We feel a surge of anticipation for the challenges and fun activities that are about to start. Our annual get acquainted meeting is scheduled for the second Sunday after classes starts. Please plan to attend as it is very important we start the year on the same page. We will begin at 9:30 in the church with the parents, and the students will go directly to their faith formation rooms with their catechists.

The initial meeting will begin as are all class meetings 9:30 a.m. and we will conclude at 10:45 a.m. which is our usual ending. We will discuss all items which may be of concern to all of you.

We would like to again welcome all of you back to faith formation and to welcome those who will be with us for the first time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 205-568-5505.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Shoop". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Pat Shoop  
Director of Faith Formation

# **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.

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 are as follow:**

1 child -\$75.00; 2 children - \$100.00; 3 or more children - \$125.00

## **Parish Membership**

Each family is required to be a registered member of St. Thomas Parish. Registration forms can be completed at the time of registration by the person who is registering your child for classes.

## **Attendance**

Each student is expected to be present for all sessions unless there is serious illness. Class time is from 9:30AM to 10:45AM on Sundays. Children in 1<sup>st</sup> 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. Parents are asked to notify the parish office if there is serious illness so that the catechist can be notified.

## **Contact Information**

Parents are encouraged to contact the appropriate catechist if there is a problem or if there is a situation which needs to be made known. The director, Pat Shoop, or Father Ray can also be contacted for assistance.

## **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 Texts**

Loyola Press is the religion series used for grades 1st-8th. St. Mary's Press is the publisher used for Confirmation I and Confirmation II classes.

## **Inclement Weather**

In case of inclement weather, the church can be called and the Faith Formation voice mail will contain pertinent information; (663-3936 ext. 100) Weather related closing can be found on the church website at [www.stthomascatholic.com](http://www.stthomascatholic.com) under Special Announcements on the Welcome page.

## **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. The student must know the process of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the student 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 the student must understand at the appropriate level the meaning of that event.

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

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.
- Confirmation at St. Thomas is a two year program

**A SPONSOR** for Confirmation **must** be:

- A practicing Catholic
- Confirmed
- At least sixteen years of age
- May **NOT** be a parent of the one confirmed
- Should be a model for the person being confirmed

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 on file**.

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 by the Bishop, and the date for Confirmation depends on the Bishop's schedule. St. Thomas requests a date in the spring, usually at the Saturday 5:30 PM Mass. However, the actual date depends on the Bishop's calendar.