



PROGRAM LEVELS

Each level of the program has a particular curriculum which is to be covered in the course of the year. Each level builds upon the previous one. In addition, at each level the children learn about the Liturgical Year, the Feasts of the Church, Feasts of Mary and other notable saints. These areas are covered in a way that each level can best be understood. Catechists also speak to the children about Catholic Social Teachings and Social Justice.

PREP levels do not necessarily correspond to your child's grammar school grade.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the parish with the latest, most up to date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. The parish will request these documents in the beginning of the year, at the time of registration. If either the Custody Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide that document to the parish immediately.

In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide an official and latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the DRE with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

RIGHT TO AMEND

This handbook is meant to provide the parent/guardian with helpful information regarding St. Thomas Aquinas Church Religious Education Program. The Pastor and/or the DRE reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary.

The PREP Handbook was updated July, 2017.

Saint Thomas Aquinas R. C. Church
601 Bristol Pike ♦ Croydon., PA 19021
Phone: 215-788-2989 ♦ Email: dre.staq@gmail.com
Parish Website: www.staq.org



Welcome to St. Thomas Aquinas PREP

**“Go and teach all nations,
Baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”**

This mission given to the disciples by Jesus is also the mission given to the Church of every age. All of us have been called to teach Jesus Christ and share his message to all nations. Fulfilling that call begins in our own families; shaping the lives of our loved ones, especially our children, so they too may teach others about Jesus.

Our PREP program is a tremendous resource for us as a parish, as well as for you, parents and guardians. However, the teaching of the faith can not be the sole responsibility of our Catechists. You, as the first teachers of your child in the faith, must make it a priority to practice the faith. Your commitment to this priority by being living examples of the Catholic faith makes the difference. Our youngest members of the church depend on all of us to work together so they may be formed by the values of the Gospel.

We are grateful for your commitment to continue to follow your call as parents to be the first teachers of your child in the faith. We are also grateful for allowing your parish to assist you in that work through the PREP program.

We pray that this year will be filled with many blessings and that all of us will grow in our knowledge of our faith and in our love for Jesus Christ.

May God bless you always!

John Brogan and Your Parish Catechists



Mission Statements

PREP Mission

The mission of St. Thomas Aquinas Church Religious Education Program is to assist parents of non-parochial school children in passing on the Catholic Faith and the love of Jesus to its younger members so that they, too, will become committed disciples and share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Catechetical Plan

The fundamental Tasks of St. Thomas Aquinas Church PREP Program are:

1. To promote further knowledge of the Catholic Faith.
2. To celebrate Christ's Salvific Presence in the Sacraments, especially Weekly in the Holy Eucharist at Mass.
3. To transmit Christ's attitudes and moral standards.
4. To help children reach a deeper communion with Jesus in prayer.
5. To form attitudes which help build Christian community (Kingdom of God/ Church).
6. To form disciples as "missionaries" so that the Good News of our Faith is passed on.



the proper authorities immediately according to the law as a Mandated Reporter. The pastor will then take the rightful steps according to Archdiocesan policies

DISCIPLINE

Parents must understand that if a child is disruptive in class, or in some way causing a discipline problem, the catechist may correct him/her. This correction will take the form of Christian correction and guidance, being for the good of the child. For repeated disruption in class, the matter will be taken to the Director of Religious Education, who may then contact the parents and arrange a conference with parent, child, and catechist. Should a child continue to exhibit disruptive behavior in a classroom, after the Catechist provides redirection of that behavior for that child, the parish reserves the right to telephone the parent/guardian to request that the child be taken home early. The child will be responsible for completing any missed work or assignments do to early dismissal.

In order for children to learn and the PREP program to be effective, children must behave appropriately at all times. The program has **NO tolerance** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including but not limited to improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation (bullying), vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name calling, obscene language or gestures and harassment.

In the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a child against any member of the parish community (PREP), the child, may be suspended (or expelled from the program). Depending on the offense, the local police department may be notified. No form of violence or bullying will be tolerated.

Contraband is never permitted on the premises. Items considered contraband include, **but are not limited to**, weapons, drugs, pocket knives, matches/lighters, and alcohol and tobacco products. Any student found possessing contraband will be immediately expelled from the program.

OUR CATECHISTS

The Catechists are NOT paid in anyway for their services. Their time and talents are provided to the parish as volunteers. Please remember to thank your child's Catechist for all that they do for your child and the parish.



EMERGENCY CLASS CANCELLATION

In the event of snow or other emergency reason, your child's catechist (teacher) will notify your family directly. This notification may be by telephone call, text or email. If the local schools in the area were cancelled for class that day, then PREP will be cancelled as well. Later in the year you will also receive information about how to obtain information on closures broadcasted on the radio and television stations.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

We ask parents to please advise us of anything that will help our catechists make learning easier for your child. Alert us if your child has difficulty seeing, hearing, delayed reading skills, ADD/hyperactivity, etc. Children with special needs are individually assessed and will be accommodated to the best of our ability through classroom site selection, catechist and assistant as needed. With your help, we strive to offer the best Catholic learning environment for each child.

FIRE SAFETY AND DISASTER PREPARATION

PREP Catechists have directives in case of fire, shelter in place and lock down. The safety of your children is very important to us. You will be informed by phone in the event of any emergency. That is why it is important that we have your cell phone numbers if you have one.

HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICATION

Health concerns should be brought to the attention of the Director of Religious Education during registration. Catechist and other personnel do not dispense or administer medication. If there is a case of great need, arrangements can be made according to the usual professional educational standards.

If your child has an allergy to a particular food or substance, please let the teacher know. On occasion, we do have celebrations and the children are given treats. To avoid issues, if we are aware of an allergy we can accommodate the need.

From time to time parents may be asked to provide a snack (food) for a special celebration. Since some children are highly allergic to peanuts, peanut butter and tree nuts, we ask that these ingredients are not in the items that you provide.

Should your child carry an EpiPen® (or another brand) for anaphylaxis, we ask that the Director of Religious Education (DRE) and your child's teacher are made aware of this situation. Your child's safety is our utmost concern at all times.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is of serious concern. Any staff member or catechist who suspects a child to be a victim of child abuse will notify



Policies

ARCHDIOCESAN REQUIREMENTS

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia requires the Sacraments to be received in the parish in which the family is registered. Otherwise, a letter of permission must be obtained from the pastor of the parish where the candidate is registered.

The Archdiocese also requires **two consecutive years** immediately prior to the Sacraments. Therefore, before receiving First Eucharist in Level 2, Levels 1 and 2 need to be completed. Readiness for the reception of a Sacrament is more important than the age/class level of a child. Discernment of readiness is shared by parents, staff and the child. The pastor will be consulted if postponement of a Sacrament is deemed advisable.

It is the policy of St. Thomas Aquinas Church that students continue their religious education uninterrupted through Confirmation, which is received in Level 7 (since Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation, it is, therefore a beginning and not an end to religious education) It is expected and prudent that students continue their religious education after they have been confirmed. With God's grace and continued relationship with Him, teens can be supported and guided to mature in the understanding and the practice of their faith.

OLDER CHILDREN

Older children who are just beginning their formal religious education will be evaluated before placement is made.

PARENTS OF SACRAMENT CANDIDATES

Parents of Sacrament candidates are expected to take an active part in preparing their child. Guidelines will be given at retreats and other meetings. Attendance by at least one parent is required at these scheduled sacramental preparation events.



REGISTRATION AND FEE

Registration is encouraged at the end of the PREP year. Registration for new families is accepted at any time. If a family is not registered in St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and for some reason finds it necessary to have the child participate in our religious education program, a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish where registered needs to be obtained. A copy of the Baptismal certificate is required for all children registering in PREP for the first time.

PREP fees for 2016-2017 are as follows: \$80 for the first child; and \$75 per child for 2 or 3 children and \$70 per child for 4 or more children. Payment is required at registration. However, if this presents a problem, please contact the DRE.

ABSENTS

Archdiocesan policy considers more than **3 absences** in a year to be excessive. Absences should be for serious reasons only: illness, death in a family, serious illness in the family, etc. A note **MUST** be sent to the catechist the class following the absence. **Make-up work** will be assigned by the catechist and **MUST** be completed by the following class.

Absences due to weekend visitation with non-custodial parent will be assessed on an individual basis. Please arrange a meeting with the Director of Religious Education if this is your situation.

Absences due to participation in sports or other extra-curricular activities are not permitted since religious education classes need to be the priority. Since we follow a sequential religious education curriculum, a child who returns to the program after an absence of a year, or more, will be placed in the appropriate level to cover the work missed.

Early pick up of students is highly discouraged. Please be **ON TIME** (6:50 PM) for each class. When there is an absolute necessity to pick up the child early, the parent or guardian needs to bring a note to the office before class begins. No one may leave the building once classes begin unless accompanied by a parent or guardian with the permission of the DRE.



OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Permission Slips must be signed by parents for any off-site activity. Adult supervision will always be provided.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents or guardians are to bring their children into Seton Hall before the beginning of class at 6:50 PM every Thursday.

DRESS CODE

While there is no specific dress code, students should be dressed comfortably but respectfully. Clothes which your child would normally wear to school are acceptable. However, t-shirts, etc. with inappropriate slogans, etc., are not acceptable. Your child may be asked to leave the classroom for such behavior. The child will be responsible for completing any missed work or assignments do to early dismissal.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Catechists have been instructed to give homework assignments. The purpose of any assignment is to help the children retain and put into practice what they have learned. Parents are asked to discuss the material taught in class and help their child better integrate it. **Your child is expected to have his/her text book(s) each week during class. If it is lost, a replacement book is \$25.00. Should your child forget his/her book there is a \$5.00 rental fee and will be billed.**

PROGRESS EVALUATIONS

To evaluate the student in the knowledge of the Catholic Faith, prayer, Christian attitudes and class participation, progress evaluations will be done in December and May.

CELL PHONES

We realize that cell phones are a necessary tool in keeping communications open with children, especially with working parents. However, it is the policy of this program that cell phones may not be used during the catechetical sessions. If a student is observed using a cell phone in any way (voice or texting) during class, it will be confiscated by the teacher and will be returned to the parent/guardian at the end of class that day.