

## **Welcome to the Religious Education Program (REP)**

The Religious Education Program is committed to educating our youth in the Catholic Heritage, to form them according to the gospel values, upholding the Catechism of the Catholic Church and help develop in them a full sense of participation in our Catholic Community. There is no discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or special needs.

Religious education is much more than passing on facts – it is about formation. The Religious Education Program supports parents, who are the primary educators, by fostering the faith of their children and assisting them on living it daily.

It is through the proclamation of God's Word, within the worshipping community of St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, that we strive to serve one another and the world in which we live.

### **Role of the Parents – A Family Affair**

According to the Church, parents are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them. A child's faith develops through the examples and real-life lessons given them by their parents, family and friends. By word and example, they form their children in the Christian life. The life of every Catholic, from childhood to adulthood, is about being formed in the image of Christ. Such a process of formation is always new and never ends! One hour and fifteen minutes each week in a religious education class is simply not enough for formation. Attending Sunday liturgies, daily prayer, conversations about Jesus and reading Scripture is essential.

The primary instruction of the Catholic family takes place at the Sunday liturgy. Living in a world with conflicting values, we need the Eucharist to help us stand firmly with one another in our faith and become the followers of Christ that we are called to be by our baptism. The family is the first forum in which the mission of evangelization takes place. Therefore, parents are recognized as having the primary responsibility for training their children in the practice of the faith. (Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World.)

With your cooperation, this program will assist and support you in this sacred duty of guiding your child to becoming a moral, spiritual and faithful person.

**Parents who choose to send their child to St. Thomas of Villanova's Religious Education Program are obliged to read this handbook entirely. After doing so, please print, sign and return the form located on the last page to your child's catechist.**

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

### Pastor:

- Father Joseph Genito, O.S.A.
- Phone: 610.525.4801
- Email: [pastor@stvparish.org](mailto:pastor@stvparish.org)

### Religious Education:

- Tara Penza, Director
- Phone: 610.525.4801, ext. 204
- Email: [rel.ed@stvparish.org](mailto:rel.ed@stvparish.org)
  
- Janine Bowers, Administrative Assistant
- Phone: 610.525.4801, ext. 2
- Email: [admin.rep@stvparish.org](mailto:admin.rep@stvparish.org)

### Parish Office Hours:

- Monday – Friday 9:00am - 4:00pm
- REP office hours vary, please call 610.525.4801 to check office staff availability.

**REP Website:** [www.stthomasofvillanovaparish.org](http://www.stthomasofvillanovaparish.org)

### Registration/Tuition:

St. Thomas of Villanova Parish believes that a fully participating active member of the parish has embraced Stewardship as a way of life. (Please see **Stewardship Covenant** at the end of this handbook.)

- Fully participating members, active in sharing Time, Talent, Treasure:
  - Tuition per child \$0
  - Sacraments per child \$0
- Non-participating members (not active in sharing Time, Talent, Treasure) and families from other parishes:
  - Tuition per child \$300.00
  - Sacraments per child \$50.00

**REP Stewardship Covenant/Re-Registration Forms are due to the REP Office by, June 15<sup>th</sup>, for the upcoming Fall classes.**

- Placement in classes is done on a first come, first serve basis.
- Registrations received after June 15<sup>th</sup>, is subject to a \$50.00 late fee.

## **Class Times: REP Grades K - 6**

- **Sundays: 10:10am – 11:25am**
- **Wednesdays: 4:45pm – 6:00pm**

Classrooms are located in the Parish Center.

## **Weather Related & Emergency Closing Information:**

- Closing Information will be emailed.
- Closing information will be posted on the website.

## **Calendar:**

- Sunday & Wednesday Class Schedules can be found on our Parish Website, under *Catholic Education → Religious Education*.
- Calendars are also distributed to students on the first day of class.
- The calendar is subject to change during the course of the year. Parents will be notified of changes via email and our website.

# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**ATTENDANCE** - We recognize that the children are involved in many wonderful activities. However, religious education must have a priority. A child should not miss several weeks of class for sports, play or band practice. In addition to your child missing important foundational material, it will also send the wrong message to the rest of the class. Excessive absences hinder a child's progress, especially when preparing for a Sacrament. Faith formation received in the program is ongoing, in that each session builds upon the previous session. Therefore, it is important that children attend their classes regularly. If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, a parent **MUST** complete the following procedures:

- Call the Religious Education Office (610) 525-4801, x204, or email [rel.ed@stvparish.org](mailto:rel.ed@stvparish.org) to report the absence. Please be sure to include your child's name and grade.
- Late students must ring the door bell to be admitted as all exterior doors are locked within five minutes of the start of class.
- ***The maximum number of absences from class during the year is three.*** If a child exceeds this number, make up work may be assigned by the Catechist and/or Program Director.
- Extended absences due to illness require a doctor's note upon return to REP.
- Chronic absences may interfere with your child's grade promotion and reception of the Sacraments.

**ARRIVAL** - Drivers transporting children to REP are asked to follow the traffic pattern of our parking lot. Older students can be dropped off at the Drop Off Area near the Chapel Portico area. Please do not park at the Drop Off Area or in any of the Handicap Parking Spots. Students should never walk through the parking lot without an adult.

- **Sunday students** are to enter the **Parish Center via the side doors** (which face the St. Augustine Annex).
- **Wednesday students** are to enter the **Parish Center through the main entrance doors**, which face the Rosemont Chapel.
- **Students in grades K-2, must be escorted to class by a parent/guardian.**
- Students should remain outside their classroom until their Catechist arrives.

### **DISMISSAL** -

- Students in **Grades K – 2**, must be picked up at their **classrooms**.
- Students in **Grades 3 – 6**, must be picked up in the **Parish Center**.
- Students are never allowed to leave the Parish Center and wait outside for pick-up.

**EARLY DISMISSAL** - Early dismissals are discouraged. Students who regularly leave early miss important class time, religion lessons and community building. It is also quite disruptive to the teacher and other students.

- Students must have a written note from parents to be dismissed early. Give the note to the teacher at the beginning of class.

**ENROLLMENT** - The faith formation provided in our program is a curriculum that builds upon the previous year. It is essential that students remain enrolled in the program consistently from year-to-year. If a parent or guardian chooses to wait and enroll their child when they are in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the student may be placed into the 1<sup>st</sup> grade REP. Any student who voluntarily leaves the program for a period of one year may be required to make-up the missed year upon re-enrollment.

**CLASS ASSIGNMENT** – Class assignments are determined on a first come first serve basis. Once a class is filled to maximum capacity, that class is closed and parents will be directed to alternative options.

**HOME SCHOOL PROGRAM** - When parents decide to be responsible for the religious education of the child(ren), they will need to meet the following criteria:

1. Parents must be registered and active in the parish and declare their option for home schooling.
2. Certificates of Baptism must be submitted to the Director of Religious Education upon request.
3. An interview should take place with the Director of Religious Education and Parents, discerning the reasons for not including their children with others of the parish.
4. The Director of Religious Education may meet periodically with the home catechists and child(ren) to review the progress of the program.
5. The home catechists will follow the curriculum chosen by the DRE for all students of the parish Religious Education program, which is the approved curriculum of the Archdiocese, unless otherwise specified.
6. The students (grades 2-6<sup>th</sup>) will come in to the Parish Center and take the mid-term, administered by the DRE. If the student does not pass the test, the DRE will send back the test to be corrected at home by student and returned to the DRE to be placed in the students file. An End of Year Test is to be administered when the text book has been completed.
7. In order for students to move up to the next grade level in REP, the Home School Tests must be completed and in their files.
8. The parents and children enrolled in home schooling who desire to receive Sacraments will participate in the Immediate Preparation Program in the parish (including all parent meetings, retreats and practicess). The readiness of the child(ren) for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation and Penance will be mutually determined by the home catechist, DRE and pastor or his designee. (Canons 843.2, 890)
9. Reception of the Sacraments must take place in the family's parish of registration and at the scheduled dates and times, unless prior permission has been given by the Pastor.
10. Home School families are expected to participate in parish activities, and parish stewardship (sharing their time, talent and treasures), as stated in our Stewardship/Re-Registration Covenant.

***Please note: The catechesis taught in the home is only for the children who live in the home.***

**Please be sure that all your phone numbers and emergency contact information listed with us is current and that you or another responsible adult can be reached during class time in the event of an emergency. We do not have the facility to care for a sick child.**

Communication to parents from this office and from catechists serve to strengthen our joint efforts to provide quality religious education for the student. The main means of communication will come via e-mail. Information is also posted regularly on our website, [www.stthomasofvillanova.org](http://www.stthomasofvillanova.org), and weekly parish bulletin (which is also available on-line). Parents are strongly encouraged to be in touch with our office if there is a concern or question. The catechist is also encouraged to e-mail or call parents as the need to do so becomes apparent. Parents are welcome to visit classrooms with advanced notification to the DRE.

### **CUSTODY OF CHILD -**

Concerns regarding parental custody of a child in the religious education program and/or sacramental preparation must be communicated in writing to the DRE.. A current custody agreement must be provided at the time of registration.

### **CURRICULUM -**

We are proud to offer our students a wonderful series from Sadlier Publishing called, ***“We Believe – Catholic Identity”*** Edition.

The series is based on the 4 Pillars of our Catholic Faith:

- Our Profession of Faith - Creed
- The Sacraments
- Morality and our Life in Christ
- Prayer

There are resources woven throughout the program which also provides families with tools to grow in their identities as Catholic Families in the world today and to live and share their Catholic faith. The, “Go Green” projects throughout the book invites students to be stewards of God’s creation, addressing Pope Francis’s challenge to care for the environment. The series was actually presented to Pope Francis in Rome and he was quite pleased.

Our goal this year in the REP is to embrace God’s loving initiative which calls each of us to respond by loving God and our neighbor – exactly what Pope Francis calls us to do!

## **RELIGION GUIDELINES -**

Below is a synopsis of the core content guidelines for each grade level as established by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and applicable to St. Thomas of Villanova REP.

### **Kindergarten**

The Bible, Creation, The Holy Family, Mary, Christian Community, Prayer, Sacraments, Liturgical Year

**Prayers:** Sign of the Cross, Intro to Hail Mary and Our Father

### **Grade One**

God the Father, Creation, Living in God's World, God the Son-Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit, Sacraments of Initiation, Mary, Liturgical Year, Prayer

**Prayers:** Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father

### **Grade Two**

Holy Trinity, Sacraments of Initiation & Healing, The Mass: 2 Parts – Liturgy of the Word & Liturgy of the Eucharist, Topics related to The Mass, Mary, Liturgical Year, Prayer, Review of steps in receiving Sacraments of Reconciliation & Eucharist

**Prayers:** Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be, Act of Contrition

### **Grade Three**

The Trinity, Sacraments, God's Law, Christian Community, Mary, Liturgical Year.

**Prayers:** Grace at Meals, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Our Father, Act of Contrition

### **Grade Four**

God the Father, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, Holy Spirit, Creed, Commandments, Grace, Sin, Conscience, The Beatitudes, Mary, Liturgical Year

**Prayers:** Grace, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Our Father, Act of Contrition, Intro to Nicene Creed

### **Grade Five**

Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing, The Sacraments at the Service of Communion, Mary, Liturgical Year, Holy Spirit, The Bible

**Prayers:** Grace, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Our Father, Act of Contrition, Nicene Creed, How to Pray the Rosary

### **Grade Six**

The Bible, Jesus as our Lord & Savior, The Church – Our Community in Spirit, Sacraments, Saints, Morality and Living our Faith.

**Prayers:** Grace, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Our Father, Act of Contrition, Nicene Creed, Rosary

### **Archdiocesan Approved Textbook Series**

Grades K – 5<sup>th</sup> grades use Sadlier's, "*We Believe – Catholic Identity*", which inspires your students to learn and live their faith and go out into the world as Catholics – proud of who they are. Our 6<sup>th</sup> Grades will use, Loyola Press's, "*Finding God*". The We Believe and Finding God Series help to build Catholic identity around the four pillars of faith as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Creed, Sacraments, Morality & Prayer. Both of these series also involve families with tools to enrich their own identity as a Catholic Family in today's world.

## **PRAYER LIFE -**

At each grade level there are prayers and other important concepts that the student must learn. We encourage developing an active prayer life among our students and families and provide many opportunities and activities to accomplish this.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN ORIENTATION & SACRAMENT MEETINGS –**

Each year the DRE conducts an Orientation Meeting for parents and guardians during the Opening Session in September. This meeting is required for all parents/guardians.

At least one parent is required to attend Sacrament Parent meetings if they have a child who will be receiving a sacrament this year. All meeting dates and times are distributed to the students, sent to parents via e-mail and can also be found on our website.

## **STUDENT BLUE BAG AND FOLDER -**

Each NEW student receives a blue book bag to hold their Religious Education book and materials. Each student will receive a textbook and a two-pocket **folder** to hold important flyers and other papers. Parents should **check** this folder each week. Often the information in these folders contain current information about events, assignment, and other communications from the parish, the catechist or the Director.

## **CYO PARTICIPATION –**

In order to participate in STV CYO sports (and represent St. Thomas of Villanova in this program) a child who attends public school **must** be registered and attending our Religious Education Program (grades 1-6<sup>th</sup>) and/or participating in our Youth Ministry Program (grades 7-12<sup>th</sup>). Any student who misses more than three classes a semester may be dropped from the CYO roster for the current semester. Inappropriate behavior may also result in being ineligible to participate in STV CYO.

## **STUDENT EVALUATIONS –**

Each student's progress in the REP is evaluated twice during the school year. These Progress Reports are distributed in **January and April** and are a good indicator of the student's growth and participation in religious formation. Comments from the teacher and parent are expected as part of the evaluation. In **January**, parents are asked to review the Progress Report with their child, **sign it and return it to their child's catechist at the next class.** In April, Progress Reports do not have to be returned.

## **PERFECT ATTENDANCE AWARD –**

This award is presented to each student in grades K – 6 who attends every scheduled class of the REP year. Constant tardiness or early dismissals can prevent the reception of this award.



## **STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE –**

We are blessed that our program continues to grow each year. However, we are totally dependent upon the dedication of our wonderful volunteers. As Christians, our behavior must be loving, kind and respectful to one another and all staff members. It is our expectation that each child is aware that he/she is in REP to learn and grow in faith. We ask parents to remind your child to give their utmost attention and respect by behaving in class and by taking care of the environment in which their classes are held.

The Religious Education Program at St. Thomas of Villanova has NO TOLERANCE for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, including, but not limited to, obstinacy, inappropriate language and/or gestures, fighting, physical and/or emotional intimidation or bullying, vandalism, failure to follow teacher's directives and/or warnings. This list is not exhaustive. **Cell phones are not allowed to be out in class and should be turned off.**

In the event a student engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct on a consistent basis, they will be sent down to the DRE's office. If the behavior continues, the DRE will contact the parents and ask for assistance. In the event that a student continues to disrupt a class, the DRE will call the parents and ask that the student be picked up from REP immediately. It may become necessary to have a meeting with the parents and the DRE and or pastor to determine a course of action. Children will always be treated with respect and fairness.

Parents are to review with their child, The **Student Guideline and Responsibilities**, which is sent home on the first day of class. Please sign and return to their catechist the next class.

## **CONTRABAND -**

Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to weapons, drugs, alcohol and tobacco products.

**BRINGING CONTRABAND TO REP SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS ONLY!** Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the program.

## **FOOD ALLERGIES –**

In light of the many REP students with food allergies, St. Thomas of Villanova's Religious Education Program is making every reasonable accommodation to lessen the possibility of exposure to food allergens by designating all classrooms as **Snack Free Zones**. This policy is to be followed before, during and after REP time.

If there is an occasion for a special celebration which includes special foods or snacks, the event shall be held in a communal REP setting. A parent or guardian of a student with a food allergy must be present at such gatherings and provide a snack for his/her child (ren.) Another possibility is an allergy free snack table, but it must include snacks which are free of all types of allergens which have been identified on the student registration form or another form of communication (written or verbal) from the family to the DRE.

The program director and/or pastor reserves the right to amend this handbook. In the event of any such amendment, parents will be given prompt notification of the changes made.

### **EMERGENCY CARE –**

Each parent is required to complete the emergency contact information on registration forms, and to keep the Religious Education Office updated on any changes in this information. Since children are only with us for a short time each week, we request all medications to be administered before or after class. However, it is understandable that there may be a need to use an inhaler, which would warrant medication being brought to class. The DRE must be informed of any medicine that is brought to class.

In the event that a student experiences sickness or a medical emergency, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.

### **EVACUATION OF BUILDING -**

In the event of a fire or other emergency that requires the students and teachers to leave the building, all will be evacuated to the area between St. Augustine Annex and The St. Thomas of Villanova Preschool. In cold or rainy weather all will go into the Preschool to await pick up. Parents/guardians will be notified immediately of such an evacuation.

### **CHILD SAFETY –**

In the **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**, the United States Bishops called for the establishment of a **Safe Environment Program** in every Diocese. At STV, we are deeply committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for our young people within our parish community and world.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Office for Child and Youth Protection is committed to creating a network of prevention and protection. Since 2003, they have trained more than 100,000 clergy, employees and volunteers in child safety and prevention of sexual abuse. These 100,000 plus adults return to their parishes, classrooms and places of service with sound knowledge to foster a network of protection for our young people.

In addition, as part of the safety requirements all adults who work with children are required to take the **Mandated Reporter Training**. **This means that these adults are mandated reporters of child abuse under the law in Pennsylvania.** Your child may tell a teacher, coach, volunteer, catechist, priest or principal that they have been harmed or know of another child who has been abused.

In all cases, the law and the policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia mandate that the following steps are to be taken immediately:

- The person who was told this information must immediately contact the CHILDLINE 1-800-932-0313, and make a format report. Or visit: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS/Public/ReferralsLearnMore>
- The person in charge of the institution or parish must be notified once the report has been made.
- The Office of Child and Youth Protection in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia must be notified at 1-888-800-8780.
- When allegations are against an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, local law enforcement authorities are notified.

The person making the report only has to have a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse. It is not his or her job to investigate the report, only to inform the proper authorities.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia provides comprehensive Safe Environment Training for clergy, employees and volunteers, as well as parents and children. Expert staff is also available to answer parent questions about background checks, training opportunities, mandated reporter policy or simply how to discuss the subject with your child. The Safe Environment Program also is pleased to offer speaker for groups. Call 215-587-2466, or visit the Office of Child and Youth Protection website at:

[www.archphila.org/protection/index.htm](http://www.archphila.org/protection/index.htm)

Please see the **Safety Requirements** for all clergy, employees and volunteers at St. Thomas of Villanova on our website, [www.stthomasofvillanova.org](http://www.stthomasofvillanova.org) ,Catholic Education → REP.

## **VISITORS –**

All doors to the Parish Center are locked during REP classes. Visitors must ring the doorbell to gain access from a Hall Monitor or staff member.

## **STEWARDSHIP PARISH -**

St. Thomas of Villanova EMBRACES Stewardship as a way of parish life and recognizes the obligation to assist all parishioners as they grow in faith. Being a, “Stewardship Parish” means that we practice the 4 pillars of Stewardship which are, Hospitality, Prayer, Formation and Service. Stewardship is a way of living. We rely on parishioners to give of their time (prayer and worship), their talent (sharing in ministries) and treasure (sacrificial giving). Stewardship parishes do not fund raise! If you look in our bulletin each week, STV donates 10% of the weekly collection to charity. The Stewardship Council offer suggestions for where there is the greatest need and STV aims to meet those needs each week. We rely on the parish community to sustain our parish by; keeping active in our wonderful service ministries, participating in regular prayerful worship, assisting in parish upkeep and educating our young

people. We keep record of our volunteers, our programs and ministries, and our giving/donations. For those families who have made a commitment to a Stewardship way of living, we charge \$0, for faith formation and Sacraments, otherwise we charge \$300.00 fee for Religious Education, and \$50.00 for Sacrament Preparation.

## **STEWARDSHIP COVENANT –**

St. Thomas of Villanova parish recognizes the rights and responsibilities of parents as the primary religious educators of their children. These are the rights and responsibilities parents assume when they request baptism for their child(ren). These rights and responsibilities continue throughout the life of the child(ren).

Therefore, we ask the Catholic parent(s) of each child to sign a Stewardship Covenant which spells out the rights and duties of both parties. This Stewardship Covenant is signed by the pastor or his representative and by the parents as they register their child(ren) in the parish Religious Education Program.

As the "first educators" of their children, parents need to stay current in the faith. Therefore, St. Thomas of Villanova parish will offer, on a regular basis, talks, presentations, workshops, and materials to help parents update and deepen their faith. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities.

### **St. Thomas of Villanova Parish agrees to:**

- 1) Support parents as they fulfill their obligation as the primary educators of their children in the faith.
- 2) Provide a professional Religious Education Program that includes:
  - a) proper and adequate learning space
  - b) competent and trained staff, catechists and other volunteer personnel
  - c) Archdiocesan approved texts, media and auxiliary materials
  - d) necessary guidelines, evaluations and supplies
  - e) communication of parish events and opportunities of service
  - f) current faith enrichment materials for parents
- 3) Provide similar support for parents who choose to home school their child(ren).
- 4) Use the weekly Stewardship offering to cover the cost of religious education.

### **The parents agree:**

- 1) To accept our responsibility as the primary educators in the faith of our child(ren) and support what they learn in the REP classes.
- 2) To witness to our child(ren) by the practice of our faith which includes Sunday worship, the celebration of Reconciliation, and other worship opportunities.
- 3) To witness to our child(ren) by collaborating with the parish in their preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

4) To witness to our child(ren) by being involved in the stewardship of the parish by sharing our Time, Treasure and Talent with the parish and other Church endeavors. (We ask that you commit to the use of envelopes or electronic donations.)

Go to <https://www.stthomasofvillanova.org> and click on Catholic Education, then REP for a copy of the Stewardship Covenant Re-Registration Form. For any questions or concerns please see the DRE or pastor.

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After reading this handbook, please print this page, sign it below & return the page to the DRE. You may give it to your child's catechist, drop it off in person or mail it to:

St. Thomas of Villanova  
Religious Education Office  
1229 E. Lancaster Avenue  
Rosemont, PA 19010

I/We hereby acknowledge that I/we have read and understand the contents of this Parent Student Handbook regarding the Religious Education Program at STV. I/We agree to the directives contained herein.

Student Name(s):

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: (please sign)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_