



Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
Augustinian Fathers
Ojai, California

Dear Parish Families,

Welcome to the Confirmation program at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church. We are so excited to journey with your family and your teen towards the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is truly a special time of spiritual formation for your teen, one that we hope will strengthen your entire family.

Over the coming months you, our youth, and families, will be doing much reflecting, sharing, praying, celebrating, serving and growing. Our staff, adult volunteers, peer leaders, and catechists are committed to supporting you all every step of the way. Most of all, this is a time of prayer for your family as your teen discerns the choices they are making, so that the reception of God's divine life is something that truly "flips on" the switch of faith, hope, and love.

As you continue ministering to your family, your parish, and the community, we ask you to be especially faithful in these areas:

- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Support a parish ministry with the gift of your time.
- Be true to the Biblical call to tithe.

In addition to worshipping here at St. Thomas Aquinas, your family has the opportunity to give your time, talent, and treasure to the many ministries this faith community has to offer. As your child's primary catechist or teacher of the faith, it is your example that will have the greatest impact on the faith formation of your child.

On behalf of the parish family of St. Thomas Aquinas, we'd like to welcome you again to the Confirmation program and pray that you and your child will find this process of formation a powerful time of faith, hope, and love.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen and guide you all, we are

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Rev. Thomas Veber, O.S.A.
Pastor

Brian M. Campos
Youth Minister



Confirmation Preparation Process

Introduction

Maturing in Christian faith is a life-long journey. Confirmation preparation is a process in Christian growth based on the belief that adolescents are at a significant point in their faith journey where they are beginning to establish a personal faith identity. Through sharing their own journey and interaction with others, the candidates are assisted in identifying and understanding how God is working in their lives, and come to a new realization of faith within the context of the parish community.

The goal of the Confirmation Preparation Process is to prepare the high school-aged youth to receive the sacrament and to deepen the faith of the parish community. A justice perspective and sensitivity to the multi-cultural diversity of the Archdiocese are integrated into this program. This process is grounded in a vision of youth ministry in which the parish community responds to the needs of the youth and encourages them to return to share their unique gifts with the parish community (A Vision of Youth Ministry, USCC, 1976).

The philosophy of the Confirmation Preparation Process is integrated into the presentation of faith themes. This includes:

- a) theology
- b) prayer
- c) reflection
- d) experiences
- e) assimilation

Year One Themes

A. Journey/ Faith Story/ Community

- To get acquainted with each other, with Jesus, and the parish community.
- To realize that we need friendship with each other and with Jesus. This makes community.

B. Personal Giftedness

- To recognize that before we can really know God and serve other, we must learn to accept ourselves.

C. Jesus

- To reflect on the Person of Jesus as seen in Scripture; as a man of prayer, as the Son of God, as God incarnate, as the model of friend, forgiveness, service, and moral behavior.
- To reflect on the Death & Resurrection of Jesus as the central event in our Christian life.

D. The Call to Follow Jesus

- To see God's call to faithful discipleship as a deeper meaning of Confirmation. (Confirmation not an ending, but a new beginning)

E. Church

- To reflect on the church's heroes, the saints. This can include people of today and of recent history who exemplify values worth living,
- To learn what it means to be Church. This includes study-of past, present, and future.



F. Morality/ Decision-Making.

- To define sin by looking at moral issues facing high school youth.
- To explore Scripture to understanding Jesus' message of sin and forgiveness.
- To help youth make informed and reasoned judgments regarding their responses to the influence of media (sex, violence, substance abuse. Etc.)
- To become more aware of personhood and the value and dignity of human life-conception to death.
- To help youth learn to make good moral decisions based on Scripture of Catholic values.

G. Liturgy & Liturgical Seasons, Worship and Prayer

- To reflect on the various forms of prayer in our Catholic tradition.
- To reflect on the Eucharistic Liturgy as the height of prayer.
- To reflect on the meaning of the various liturgical seasons of the year; Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.

H. Scripture

- To introduce the Christian Scriptures as a biased account of the faith community.
- To understand the importance of Jesus' story in living now.
- To teach Mary's role as Mother of Jesus.
- To look at the parables and miracles of Jesus as recorder in the Scripture.
- To explore the relevancy of the parables and miracles in the life of a teen.
- To reflect on the Acts of the Apostles focusing on Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

Year Two Themes

A. Justice and Service

- To teach the principles of social Justice as reflected in Catholic tradition including the need to respect the environment as God's gift to humanity and to explore the role of service from the Catholic Christian perspective.

B. Human Sexuality

- To teach sexuality and dating from a mature perspective, reflecting Catholic values.

C. Catholic Belief & Practices

- To learn the meaning of symbols in the Catholic tradition.
- To review discipleship, service, commitment to the church, and worship as part of the life of a mature Confirmed Catholic way of life.

D. The Sacramental life of the Church

- To teach the theology of the Sacraments with a special emphasis on Confirmation.
- To teach the meaning of Baptism, sacrament of belonging, and its relationship to being Church today.
- To introduce Confirmation, its symbols, and its relationship to Baptism
- To introduce the meaning of sponsorship.
- To teach the meaning and rites of celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation
- To review the history of Confirmation and recall the meaning and connection of witnessing to Jesus.



- To teach the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as they relate to high school youth and their life experiences.
 - To examine Eucharist as the central sacrament in our Catholic tradition.
 - To illustrate to youth how we, as Church, celebrate God's loving forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - To teach the meaning of the sacrament of Matrimony
 - To teach the meaning of the sacrament of Holy Orders
 - To teach the meaning of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
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- E. Discipleship/ The Mystical Body of Christ
- To teach the missionary call shared by all followers of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel to all corners of the world.
 - That the church is the mystical body of Christ with Christ as our head and with us as the many parts of the body, and how we are all mystically connected to one another.
 - To reflect on the need to share our own gifts and talents to build up this mystical body that we belong to for our own betterment, the betterment of our community, and ultimately the betterment of the world.

Role of Parents

As their child's primary Catechist (*teacher of the faith*) parents play the MOST important role in the spiritual upbringing of their child. Recent research has shown that the current generation of young people is much closer to their parents than previous generations. As a result, today's young people tend to think and believe in the same way as their parents. With regards to matters of faith, this current generation of young people are much more likely to adopt the religious practices of their parents than previous generations.

Parents of Confirmation candidates:

- Are the primary educators of their children;
- Represent the Church by showing their child a Christian example and the importance of faith;
- Serve as models for their child by being committed Christians;
- Should require their child to worship with the parish community weekly at Mass;
- Reinforce and promote belief in the home;
- Encourage their child to reflect and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- Are not permitted to be Confirmation Sponsors for their own child;
- Assist their child with the immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation through prayer, study and service;
- Stress the initiation aspect of the Sacrament by encouraging their child to continue learning about their faith in the parish life and programs into the high school years;
- Help their child in understanding that Confirmation service projects are the beginning of a life committed to Christian service;
- Commit to daily prayer for the Candidates.

Role of the Candidate

As Candidates continue preparing for Confirmation, they must:

- Attend Mass weekly Listen attentively and participate willingly in Religious Education classes;
- Respect each other's point of view;
- Respect their Catechists and Team Leaders;



- Ask questions. (This helps to develop a more mature understanding of Christian beliefs and make their own commitment stronger);
- Invite a practicing Catholic to be their Confirmation Sponsor (see the “Sponsor” section for details);
- Participate in the Confirmation Retreat;
- Return all necessary paperwork by their due dates.
- Remain an active part of the Catholic community by continuing to learn about and practice their faith.

Role of the Sponsor

The sponsor is a religious mentor and role model that the candidate chooses. He or she is someone the candidates can look up to as a role model of an active Catholic adult and is someone the candidate feels comfortable talking to about faith and life issues. The sponsor should inspire their candidate to engage in a deeper relationship with Christ and the Church. A sponsor must be a confirmed individual, active within the Catholic Church, they must be 18 years of age, and CANNOT be the mother or father. Because of the active roles that sponsors are going to be taking, it is important that the sponsor is able to come to the Confirmation events listed on the Sponsor Calendar. This means that if at all possible the sponsor should live near the candidate as to have an active role in their lives as they attend service projects with them and build a Christ-centered mentor relationship.



What do you mean by active role?

The sponsors will have to attend a number of Confirmation events with the specific intent of getting to know their candidate on a deeper spiritual level throughout the year. Their involvement in the spiritual growth of the candidate could include attending weekly Mass with their families, spending time with the candidate in spiritual enriching opportunities, and meeting with the candidate at least once a month to discuss how their Confirmation experience is going and if they have questions or problems they want to talk about. Because of their relationship with their sponsor, candidates should reflect a mature faith and desire to becoming an active adult in the Catholic Church.

What if the sponsor cannot make it to some of the events?

Parents, or another person, can substitute for the sponsor. HOWEVER this is discouraged. Remember, Confirmation is a journey the candidate and sponsor should make together. Choose someone who will be available enough to help the candidate through the decision making program.

Expectation of Sponsors

- It is expected that Sponsors will meet monthly with the Candidate outside of class time, to encourage and assist the Candidate in faith formation.
- It is expected that Sponsors will participate in meetings and/or training sessions for Sponsors.
- It is expected that Sponsors will participate in the Liturgical Rites and in other Sponsor/Candidate events.



Mandatory Assignments

Weekly Mass Reflections

One of the most important, if not the MOST important, aspects of our Catholic faith is to celebrate the Mass weekly. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the source and summit of Catholicism because it is where we participate in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and where we partake of His most holy body & most precious blood in the Holy Eucharist, which is rightly called the Most Blessed of the Seven Sacraments. Because the most important goal of this program is to form good and faithful Catholics, we are requiring that during these years of preparation, that our candidates develop the good habit of attending weekly Mass. We also want to make sure that they are taking the time to properly reflect and contemplate the lessons and the graces they receive from the Mass, so we do require them to reflect on their experience by filling out a weekly Mass reflection sheet that is due at the beginning of every class session. Candidates will only be given ½ credit for the class they attend if they do not turn in this reflection sheet at the beginning of that class.

Patron Saint Report

During their Confirmation, Candidates will be asked to take on a Confirmation name. This name will be the name of their chosen patron saint. During Year 1, candidates will be asked to write a one-page report on the patron saint that they chose.

Parish Spring Festival – First weekend of May

Each year, candidates for Confirmation are required by the Archdiocese to attend and volunteer in at least one parish activity. The easiest way to do this is to attend the annual Spring Festival, which is our largest annual fundraiser each year. While we recognize that most of our students already volunteer their time outside of the church, an important part of being a Catholic Christian is being in community with one another and being faithful stewards of our Catholic faith. This requirement is designed to help them feel a part of our parish family and to experience first hand what it means to be an active member of parish community.

Confirmation Retreat

It is mandatory that our candidates attend their Confirmation retreat.

Retreat:

Sunday December 10, 2017 all day at St. Thomas Aquinas Church and will be lead by a team from NET Ministries, more info. to come as we approach the event. For more information about NET Ministries please visit www.netusa.org

Optional Field Trips

Fall Field Trip:

Inspiration Tour 2017 presented by Life Teen International at Six Flags Magic Mountain in Valencia - Saturday November 4, 2017 all day.

Spring Field Trip:

Los Angeles Youth Day 2018 at the Anaheim Convention Center – Thursday March 15, 2018 all day.



Attendance

Attendance for our Confirmation classes is mandatory for our candidates. *If a candidate has more than 4 absences, they will be asked to repeat another year of instruction.* All absences must be made up through an alternative make-up assignment. In the event that you do miss a class please contact Brian at 646-4338 x102 or by email at brianc@stacojai.org or Aina at 646-0307 or by email Aina@stacojai.org so we can give you the make-up assignment.

APPENDIX

Mass Schedule at St. Thomas Aquinas Church

Daily Mass:	Saturday Vigil Mass:	Sunday Mass:
Weekdays 9:00am	5:00pm (English)	7:30am (English)
Saturday 8:00am	7:30pm (Spanish)	9:30am (English)
		11:30am (Spanish)

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturdays 3:30pm- 4:30pm or by appointment 646-4338

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Thursday 9:00am – Saturday 8:00am at the Mother’s Chapel in the side of the church.

Websites/Social Media

www.stacojai.org --- Parish Website

www.facebook.com/STACojai --- Parish Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/STACkids --- Religious Education Facebook Page

Important Contact Information:

Brian Campos, Director of Youth Ministry 646-4338 x 102 brianc@stacojai.org

Aina Yates, Director of Religious Education 646-0307 aina@stacojai.org

Parish office 646-4338 office@stacojai.org

