

Greetings to Parents/Guardians of Grades 7 and 8,

Welcome to Faith Formation at St. Thomas the Apostle Church!

Generations of Living Faith has been an awesome experience for our families. We believe that this model has been very successful in keeping our young families actively engaged in their faith and our parish community. Middle School can be rough- often referred to as the awkward years-therefore planning for a faith formation program to meet their needs can be tricky.

Our mission is to provide these students with opportunities to grow in our Catholic faith and deepen their relationship with Jesus and to provide some spiritual resources for our families.

After all faith is a relationship-NOT information.

With a team of mentors it makes it easier to explore the everyday questions that middle schoolers struggle with-for example- they may notice that a loving and all-powerful God allows good people to die. They wrestle with this and it is okay and normal. As mentors, we won't always have the answers but we can affirm our faith by sharing stories and ultimately guide them back to Jesus.

It is our hope that through limited gatherings students can begin to develop a relationship with Jesus, their peers and the church.

We want our middle school students to pray together, enjoy a meal together, listen to music together and develop friendships while reflecting on their faith. We want them to understand service and what it means to serve family, church and community. We want them to feel safe in an ever changing world. We also want them to be bold in their faith and to be able to express all of their potential because after all they are made in the image of God. That is looking at themselves in a whole new way.

Coming together as a group fosters those relationships.

It has been an awesome experience to serve most of this age group in house all the way through the pandemic. Class sizes were limited to 15 and vibrant prayer and discussions along with fun and food were the center of each session.

This year we used the Edge/Life-Teen Middle School Ministry Curriculum. The title of this year's program was ICONIC. We discovered Jesus as a Legend, How he earned Fandom, His Humble Beginnings and finally How He came to the Hall of Fame.

This curriculum has generated lots of participation among our young people in class.

Please encourage your children to continue their journey of faith in this critical stage of their life.

The title for this Year's Faith Discussions is –NOW AND FOREVER – Questions about the Mass

Here is an excerpt of the overview:

#### THE BIG QUESTIONS

Generation Z (those who were born between 1995 and 2015) is unlike any other generation before them. We are Facing the reality that young people are becoming less religious, are less likely than ever before to claim a religious identity, and are no longer being raised with a Christian worldview,

therefore,we are taking an entirely new approach to how we talk about religion and our Catholic faith with middle school youth. Before they can care about what the Church teaches, they need to know that God exists. Before we can teach them details about morality, they need to know that there is absolute truth. Before we can expect them to be excited or invested in the Mass and the sacraments, they need to know Jesus. This curriculum will be full of Catholic teachings, doctrines, devotions, and practices, but it will have a greater focus on the foundations of our faith and present them in a way that answers the big questions this generation is asking.

I look forward to the upcoming sessions for our middle school parishioners.

Thank you for trusting in us to share our Catholic Faith with your children and we look forward to another year of faith discussions that will lead our children to a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

Our church is open for daily and weekend Masses. (masks are required) When you are ready and feel safe Jesus is waiting for you.

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