

*ST. ANTHONY  
CHURCH  
YOUTH FORMATION*



*HIGH SCHOOL  
AND  
CONFIRMATION  
GUIDELINES*



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We at St. Anthony Church welcome you and your children to our Formation and Ministry Programs. We ask your support and participation as we continue to bring into focus the primary purpose of faith formation, that is, to teach our children to imitate Christ by learning and living his Gospel message.

Our aim is to help your children develop a sense of the Gospel values that will lead them to a love of a real, personal, and caring God together with all peoples of the world. As such, the specific goals of our Youth Formation and Ministry Programs are:

- To help our youth understand and share the Gospel message of Jesus;
- To teach them to pray and strengthen their relationship with God;
- To encourage and help them participate in the life of our parish community;
- To encourage and help them learn to serve others, particularly those not as fortunate as themselves;
- To provide an environment for the adults of our parish community to become catechists, thereby serving God and enriching their own faith;
- And to help all those involved—child, youth, and adult—enjoy the fellowship of one another, have fun, and build lasting friendships.

# High School Formation Program

The High School Formation program at St. Anthony Church focuses on each student coming to a better understanding of his or her personal faith. This includes focusing on what it means to have a relationship with God, and a how to encourage and develop that fellowship. We assume that at this point in the student's formation, that they have a basic understanding of the tenants of our Catholic faith.

The program is open to students in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades and meets on various nights throughout the year. It consists of a combination of the following: Mass, Triduum, mini courses (required and elective), Focus on Faith meetings, spiritual events, retreats, and ministry commitments.

**Mass:** Mass attendance is our most important requirement. Each child must fulfill his/her obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and each Holy Day of Obligation. Sign in sheets, located at each exit of the church, must be filled in and handed to the priest or deacon. If for any reason, neither is at the door, please bring it to the Priest's Sacristy to the left of altar. IF you should attend Mass at another Catholic Church, please have the priest or deacon sign a bulletin and hand that into the Youth Formation Office.

**Classes:** Each year's program offers one (1) credit courses which are either 3 or 4 week sessions. Classes focus on various aspects of our faith for your child to choose according to his/her interest.

We also offer single evening session classes and events (1/3 credit) on a variety of topics as well as book and film discussion groups.

Each student will take 3 required (core) courses (1 credit each) and the equivalent of 3 credits of electives.

Core Courses: Scriptures part 1  
Scriptures part 2

## Morality

Electives: various topics. Students may take 3 one credit courses or a combination of 1 and 1/3 credit courses.

Classes are repeated during the year to maximize scheduling flexibility.

**Focus on Faith Sessions:** There are 4 large group meetings per year that that students re required to attend.

Focus on Faith meetings seek to take the students' faith journey to another level. They are an essential element of our program since they bring the entire group together as a Christian community. Relaxed and informal, these programs are open to all high school students as well as parents of those in the program. They come together to discuss issues, hot topics, and current events while exploring their faith in each area.

Focus on Faith meetings are offered four times each year in conjunction with the seasons of the church. They meet at various times around our Mass schedule.

**Retreats:** Students are to attend 2 one day retreats (1 per year); one as a 1<sup>st</sup> year student prior to requesting Confirmation and one immediately before Confirmation. We have fun, grow, share, are challenged, and learn on retreats. The transformation and conversion that we experience on a retreat brings faith, challenges, and memories for a lifetime.

**Ministry Commitments:** As Christians, we are obligated to take care of our neighbors. We strive to instill this in the children in our program. Our high school program offers various opportunities for the students to live out our obligation to service as Catholics. Students will **choose one ministry commitment each month during the academic year or in the summer.** Students will be given a list of opportunities from which to choose. The list will include

corporal and spiritual works of mercy as well as opportunities to choose a parish ministry. There is a ministry form that each student must fill out and hand in to the Youth Formation Office. We need them for our records. No form=no credit.

**Spiritual Events:** Each year students are expected to attend at least 2 spiritual events offered here at St. Anthony Church. These events are included on the list of the ministry commitments.

**Triduum:** All students must attend all three (3) services of the Triduum in order to apply for Confirmation.

**Other Aspects:**

**Outside Activities:** Outside activities abound for our high school students such as Food Fast, Mission Work Experience, Youth Spectacular, and Leadership retreats. Family and friends are encouraged to join us on these experiences. Any other suggestions for activities are welcome!

**Youth in Action:** our high school youth group will meet every other Sunday at 6:00 p.m. or at a time to be determined for convenience. The students will meet either in the Parish Center or at an off-site activity. In the past, this group has raised funds for Haitian Relief, Catholic Relief Services, and making and serving meals at St. Vincent DePaul Shelter. They have also participated in Habitat for Humanity/Waterbury. They have raised funds for our mission trips as well as social events for themselves.

**Parish Involvement:** The youth have opportunities to participate in many areas of our parish community that don't necessarily gather them together as a youth "group." They can assist during Masses as readers, musicians, greeters, and assistants in Children's Liturgy. They can also be assistants in Youth Formation classes and work at The Pumpkin Patch. These opportunities assist in initiating youth, not our parish community on a regular basis, not just for special youth

functions. Again, these opportunities are offered as ministry commitments.

**Invitation to All:** And let's not forget...our youth ministry is not just for the youth! Adults serve because they love God and love our youth. They also serve because they realize how much they grow themselves. Some adults assist a couple of hours per week, some much more, depending on the amount of time they can offer. Youth Ministry gives the adult leaders an opportunity to respond to God's calling in concrete ways that really make a difference. It also offers wonderful, life-giving friendships with other adults. Please consider being part of our team. We need chaperones for various functions as well as adult leaders to help with activities such as shelter meals.

**Intake sessions:** Each year begins in September with a required Intake Session where the Family team, consisting of **child and parent**, meet with the Family Team, consisting of the student, parent(s), and Formation advisor to schedule classes for the year.

**Students are required to attend one intake session with a parent.** You may call ahead to schedule a time to meet once you get the schedule for the intake sessions. Please contact the Youth Formation Office with any questions.

**Courses and schedules will be mailed to in July or August.**

**Parent Participation:** Parents are encouraged to be active involved in the high school program and the preparation for the reception of confirmation.

We ask and expect parents to:

- Be enrolled members of the parish.
- Be a faith role model for your child as well as the rest of the young people in our program.
- Attend weekly Liturgy, Holy Days of Obligation as well as other church functions with your teen.
- Attend and help with at least one Focus on Faith per year.

- Discuss the material presented with your teen.
- Provide transportation for all meetings and activities; punctuality when dropping off and picking up is important.
- Attend parent meetings as they arise.
- Pray for their own child as well as the entire program.

## **Summary of requirements for the high school program in order to apply for the reception of Confirmation**

The requirements of high school formation include:

- Attendance of weekly Liturgy and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Attendance of Triduum services between grade 8 and the reception of Confirmation; this includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil.
- Attendance at our 4 Focus on Faith sessions per year.
- 6 credits - 3 core and 3 elective through our high school program.
- Two 1 day retreats.
- One ministry commitment per month 2 of which should be spiritual events.

## **Attendance Policy**

**We expect all parents to be responsible enough that the faith formation of their child should take precedence over other activities.**

1. All activities that are part of the program are included in this policy. Therefore, attendance will be taken at all small and large group gatherings/sessions. Retreats. Special events.
2. Mass sign-in sheets **must be handed to a priest or deacon** when leaving church or services. If you attend another church, it must be Catholic. Please bring in a signed bulletin. **Commitment to the Mass is required for the sacramental preparation for Confirmation. THIS MUST BE THROUGHOUT**

## **THE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM NOT JUST BEFORE CONFIRMATION!**

3. In order to receive credit, students are expected to be at all classes and Focus on Faith sessions unless illness or family emergency arises. Sports events/practices, trips, weekends away, homework, and all other reasons are not acceptable for being absent.
4. If a class is missed due to illness or family emergency, arrangements will be made between the student and the Youth Formation Office.
5. If a student is late, leaves early, or is disruptive, credit for the evening will not be given and that class must be made up at a later date.
6. If a student has a special circumstance, please call or email the Youth Formation to speak with the DRE or the Asst. DRE. If you feel more comfortable, you are also welcome to speak with Father Mark.

### **Behavior Policy**

***"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart with all your soul, and with your entire mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."***

**With Christ's words in mind we expect our students to:**

- † Respect for everyone by using well mannered language with considerate attitude.
- † Respect for each other and all parish property.
- † To be open about learning about the faith.
- † Be polite and respectful to all catechists and staff.
- † Be quiet and attentive once the class begins.
- † To bring all books and other material needed for class each week and do all homework assignments.
- † To remove all hats while entering the building.

- † Respect themselves by wearing modest clothing, having appropriate shirt designs with nothing offensive.
- † **No electronic equipment, i.e. cell phones, iPods, etc. will be allowed in any class. Such equipment will be confiscated until the end of class when a parent can retrieve it from the catechist or Formation Office.**

We are proud of the behavior of the young people who have gone through our program. However, we would like to remind you that proper behavior and conduct is expected. Any recurring behavior or conduct problem will be addressed with the parents and the DRE.

**THREE STRIKE SYSTEM:** Behavior problems or inattentiveness will be handled with the following "Three strike system."

1. The catechist/leader will speak to the candidate directly as to the problem and what must be done in order to correct the situation. (STRIKE 1)
2. If the situation continues, the catechist will notify the DRE who will meet with the candidate, his parents, and the catechist (if possible) to discuss what must be done in order to correct the situation. (STRIKE 2)
3. IF the situation continues, the catechist will notify the DRE, who in turn, will notify the pastor and request that that candidate be removed for the program. (STRIKE 3)

## CONFIRMATION

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth...The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you,"

JN 14:15-17, 26.

*"Confirmation is not a sacrament that is chosen for us as in infant baptism. It is a serious choice we make on our own. It is a commitment we make to live in the fullness of the faith. Such a commitment requires careful preparation and the support of the Parish community. In view of this, I trust you can appreciate the logic and need to receive the proper formation for this sacrament in the fullness of the parish community."*

*- Bishop Emeritus Louis*

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply as children of God, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with its mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words, accompanied by deeds.

A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the Church community and in the world.

Young adults/teens seeking the Sacrament of Confirmation will attend a four (4) week sacramental preparation program after the completion of certain high school program requirements.

### Overview

Young adults/teens seeking the Sacrament of Confirmation must be enrolled in our high school program.

Our Confirmation Sacramental training is embedded in our high school program. Our high school program begins in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Students have the option of requesting Confirmation in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Once a student has completed certain high school program requirements, he/she will come to us as young adults to request Confirmation. Candidates are confirmed in the spring.

### **Application for the reception of Confirmation**

Once the above has been completed, the student may apply for entrance into the sacramental preparation program. The application will include:

- A letter to Father Mark requesting the sacrament of Confirmation.
- A written reflection which includes the following: A) a discussion of the general understanding of Confirmation and why the candidate wants to be confirmed; B) a brief history of the saint chosen and why that name is being taken; C) the name of the sponsor, the relationship to the candidate and how he/she lives a mature Catholic faith. Specific examples must be included. Attendance at weekly mass is a priority; D) an explanation of each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how the candidate sees them operating in his/her life and the life of his/her sponsor; E) how the candidate expects to actively serve his/her parish community as a confirmed Catholic, what at the/she will receive by attending Eucharist and why weekly attendance as a confirmed Catholic is important; what is the most valuable lesson he/she received in his/her years in Faith Formation and the impact it had on the candidate's life.
- The essay is to be a minimum of three (3) typed pages, double spaced, and 12 point font. If all elements are not included, the essay will be returned.

- **Appropriate paperwork for the sponsor should be submitted by the date in the Fall chose by the Formation Office. Guidelines will be provided.**
- An interview with Father Mark or a deacon in the parish.
- Mass of Commitment, Confession, rehearsals for the sacrament.

## **Selecting a Sponsor**

The following are requirements for the role of the sponsor as defined by canon law:

A Sponsor:

- must be at least sixteen (16) years of age.
- must be a fully initiated Catholic (one who has received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.)
- must participate regularly in Mass.
- may not be the parent of the candidate.
- Tries to live by his/her commitment to the Church's teaching in faith and morals.

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The following are recommended characteristics of a Sponsor:

- Having a Sponsor who is a local resident promotes consistent involvement of the Sponsor throughout the Confirmation process which serves to emphasize the sacrament's focus on community. For this reason, it is suggested that the Sponsor be a member of our parish community.
- A Sponsor should have a positive and comfortable relationship with the candidate.
- A Sponsor should be a good role model and set a good example for the candidate.
- The Sponsor should be willing to commit the time and energy required to meet with and guide the candidate over the next year.

## Striking a Balance

We are aware that students have lives outside the parish and are involved in sports and other extracurricular activities which fill their schedules. Being active in our program requires a balance to be struck. It is not our desire to have our youth resent their time spent in our program, but to appreciate the efforts they make through the process of formation. Our plan is not to weigh the candidates down unreasonable demands, but to help them fully appreciate their journey of faith, while providing ample opportunities to explore their individuality within the Church. Therefore, by providing a flexible program, the options offered far outnumber the requirements.

### DISMISSAL FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL EVENTS: ZORACH V> CLAUSON 342U.S.306 (1956)

This U.S. Supreme Court case ruled that it is not unconstitutional for a public school student to attend religious education instruction at a parochial or church eve even if this should disrupt the public school schedule. By "public school schedule" it has been interpreted to include sporting events, band competitions, school plays, and any other public school sponsored event. Any type of "punishment" for missing or leaving an event early is NOT permitted and is a violation of the law.

Therefore, school personnel cannot:

- Threaten the student in anyway (example: removal form the team.)
- Mock or make fun of the child's religious convictions/
- Point out the reason why a student is not present or leaving early to other staff or students.
- Place a penalty such as extra laps, benching, or any other type of action, which is placed upon the student because of his/her absence or early dismissal.

**ST. ANTHONY**  
**HIGH SCHOOL/CONFIRMATION PROGRAM**  
**Confirmation Agreement Form**

*Please complete and return this form to the Religious Education Office with your course selection sheet at your Intake Session.*

**Candidate Agreement**

I have read and understand the requirements for Confirmation as outlined in the Confirmation Handbook and agree to put forth my best effort to fulfill them. It is understood that at the end of the Confirmation Preparation, my effort will be evaluated and a recommendation made as to my readiness to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. I agree to cooperate with the Staff, Teachers/Leaders, and Faith sharers in helping me to become a more fully, active Catholic.

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Student's Signature

Date

**Parent Agreement**

I have read and understand the requirements for the Confirmation outlined in the Confirmation Handbook and agree to put forth my best effort to support my child in preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This includes making certain my child attends Mass and High School and Confirmation classes, actively participates and meets appropriate deadlines and requirements. I understand that, at the end of the Confirmation preparation, their effort will be evaluated and a recommendation made as to readiness of my child to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

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Parent's Signature

Date