

June 28, 2022

Dear Parishioners and Parents,

We are excited to announce a new collaboration between St. Cecilia and St. Thomas Aquinas!

In 2013, our two parishes joined forces to offer collaborative youth ministry, pooling staff time and resources to make the offerings to our young people even stronger. In recent years our staff have noticed additional opportunities for joint efforts and, in consultation with both parish's Pastoral Councils and Faith Formation Commissions, we have decided to move forward with these opportunities. These changes will affect our middle school and high school families.

Middle School Faith Formation

Beginning this fall, St. Thomas and St. Cecilia will combine Wednesday middle school faith formation. All middle school students from both parishes will meet at St. Cecilia. Catechists from St. Thomas will still serve our youth but they will do so at St. Cecilia's facilities, joining forces with St. Cecilia catechists. Both Phil Stone (St. Thomas's Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation) and Zeke Mientkiewicz (St. Cecilia's Coordinator of Middle School Faith Formation) will be present on-site to coordinate and supervise sessions.

In addition, our staff and catechists will move from providing lecture-based, textbook formation to a method of formation based on small group discussion. In recent years, small groups have proved invaluable throughout the Church as a vehicle for more personalized formation. Anecdotal experience has shown that students who receive faith formation in a small group experience are more likely to translate that formation into a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, something we want to foster in all of our students. Our high school formation has also utilized the small group format for many years and has seen good fruit from this method. Transitioning our middle school formation to a small group style will create a more seamless hand-off between our middle school and high school programming.

High School Youth Ministry

While our middle school students from both parishes will begin meeting together at St. Cecilia this fall, our high school students will also experience formation jointly under one roof. For the past several years since collaborative youth ministry began at both parishes, our high school students have been split between two sites, St. Thomas and St. Cecilia. This has made it difficult to promote a culture of togetherness and to provide special formation opportunities for all of our teens on Wednesday nights.

Prompted by telling results from a survey disseminated to our most recent class of high school teens, our staff went to the drawing board to brainstorm ways to more readily address the cares and concerns of our youth. Guest speakers and Nights of Adoration seemed to us to be an obvious way to enhance our parishes' formation offerings but accommodating this requires all of our students to meet regularly together at one location. Hence, the move to house all Wednesday night high school formation at St. Thomas Aquinas. Our staff also hopes that exposing our teens to the Catholic Student Center at St. Thomas will encourage their faith after graduation. Encountering college students who are living a joyful and integrated Catholic life will increase the likelihood that our teens will seek out a similar Catholic community at whatever college they choose.

Moving Forward

We know that these changes may cause some inconveniences as you are required to take your child to a new location for their formation. While we never want to create obstacles to your family receiving formation, we feel very strongly that the benefits and fruits that will come from these changes will far outweigh any hardship that may accompany them.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to our staff!

God bless you!

Fr. Kyle Digmann
Pastor, St. Thomas Aquinas

Fr. Don Czapla
Pastor, St. Cecilia