

April 6, 2025

Dear Religious Education Families,

We would like to share an important update regarding our Religious Education program. Bishop Tylka has asked parishes to discern ways we can collaborate in our efforts to make disciples. We have answered this call by partnering with area parishes to form Peoria Life Teen, hold combined 8th grade Confirmation retreats, and to bring evangelist Chris Stefanick to town, among other efforts. This collaboration has allowed for higher quality programming, more efficient use of resources, and more sustainable volunteer opportunities.

Due to the success of these efforts, and the challenges associated with maintaining a high quality Religious Education program, St. Thomas the Apostle, and St. Vincent de Paul will begin an exciting Religious Education partnership in the 2025-26 academic year. Students from both parishes will attend weekly classes together at one location, taught by catechists from each parish.

This partnership will nearly double the number of students in Religious Education, allowing for:

- ❖ One class per grade level
- ❖ Larger class sizes
- ❖ More fruitful classroom discussions
- ❖ Better utilization of catechists' time and skills
- ❖ Consistent adult/student ratios for safe environment
- ❖ Better accommodations for students with special needs

Classes will take place this Fall on Wednesdays from 6:00pm-7:00pm at St. Thomas the Apostle in Peoria Heights. This location was selected as several of their school teachers serve as catechists and they have a Religious Education Coordinator on staff. Outside of this change, Religious Education will remain largely the same. All registration, payment, and sacraments will take place at the students' home parish and parish leadership will maintain their presence and relationship with families.

We understand that this change may cause some growing pains. However, we are confident that through this partnership, we will continue forming our children into the saints they were created to be. If you have questions about this process, please reach out to the leadership of your respective parish.

In Christ,



Father Stephen Willard, Pastor  
St. Vincent de Paul



Lydia Brennan, Director of Evangelization  
St. Vincent de Paul



Msgr. Jason Gray, Pastor  
St. Thomas the Apostle



Mary Cushing, Director of Faith Formation  
St. Thomas the Apostle