

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church and Student Center

Home of the Colonel Catholics

Guide Book & Directory

Effective January 1, 2018

P.O. Box 2051 Nicholls State University † Thibodaux, LA 70310
204 Madewood Drive † Thibodaux, LA 70301

Parish Office - 985.446.6201 † Fax - 985.449.0710
Website - <http://stthomasthibodaux.com> or <http://nsucatholics.org>
Email Address - stthomas@hdiocese.org
Facebook - www.facebook.com/St.Thomas.Aquinas.Nicholls.State
Text Reminders - Text @staparish to 81010



Parish Mission Statement

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church is a personal parish established to provide a Catholic environment to the students, faculty and staff of Nicholls State University. Our community is blessed by local families who have joined our church, bringing their gifts and talents to build a vibrant and life-giving parish. Together, we stand committed to support and encourage one another in the love of Christ, and to carry the presence of Christ to this university and the entire world.

History of Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church At Nicholls State University

Campus Ministry has had roots at Nicholls since 1948 when Francis T. Nicholls Junior College of Louisiana State University first opened in the region. The current chapel was built in the early 1960s and consecrated by Archbishop John Patrick Cody on January 26, 1965, just two days before the feast of its patron. The university parish of St. Thomas Aquinas was founded in 1970 as a “personal parish” to serve the students, faculty, staff, and administrators of Nicholls State University and their spouses, children, and dependents. Membership in the community is open to anyone who wishes to register. Founding Pastor Rev. Wilmer Todd served from 1968-1979 and was followed by Rev. Richard Hemmingway who served from 1979-1980. Rev. Etienne LeBlanc then became pastor from 1980-1986, followed by Rev. Scott Dugas from 1986-1988, Rev. Charles Perkins from 1988-1994, Rev. Alexander Francisco from 1994-1997, Rev. Jay Baker in 1997, Rev. Vincente DeLa Cruz from 1998-2002, Rev. James Morrison from 2002-2007, Rev. Joseph Pilola from 2007-2013, and Rev. André Melancon from 2013-present.

To encourage greater outreach to the Nicholls community, lay campus ministers began working at the Catholic Center in 1988: Tina “Tiki” Vial (1988-1994), Lisa Waguespack (1995-1996), Madeline Cherie (1997-1999) and (2002-2006), Roch Gernon (2008-2010), and Monique Legendre (2010-2012). Through the generosity of our parishioners, during the capital campaign, the Fall 2012 Semester kicked off with five campus ministers including Cissy Atzenhoffer and a rotation of missionaries from Mary Mother Church—Yvlene Bernard, Jennifer Ely, Addy Gonzales, Mary Graham, and Mary Hart. St. Thomas’ vibrant Campus Ministry continues to grow, supporting the needs of the community.

In 2004, a Parish Mission Team was established. Members of the parish and students were involved with this effort, selecting a mission in Nicaragua. They made trips to Nicaragua during the summer of 2005, 2006, and 2007, ministering to the people of Nicaragua and building five homes during this time.

In August of 2005, following Hurricane Katrina, St. Thomas Aquinas opened its doors to evacuees with pets, who had no other options for shelter. Within a few hours of the first evacuee’s arrival, our parish came alive. Parishioners volunteered in huge numbers, offering donations of supplies, clothes, time, talent, and treasure. Anyone with a special skill went right to work. Doctors, nurses, cooks, veterinarians, plumbers, electricians, social workers, and case managers worked 24/7 to assist these evacuees with meeting their most basic needs and reuniting them with their loved ones. Media coverage referred to the facility as Noah’s Ark. Letters of gratitude and monetary support came pouring in from animal lovers all over the world, which made it possible to help some families get back on their feet. Our students and parishioners worked hand in hand, developing lasting relationships and forming solid bonds that strengthened our community.

Over the years, pastors have introduced various programs and activities for students and parishioners. Father Etienne LeBlanc brought the weekend retreat called Awakening. Father Alex Francisco introduced a free meal called Not on Bread Alone in which various parishes in the diocese donate a free meal to students, faculty, and staff. Father Vic DeLa Cruz began a Children’s Nativity Play and the parish’s Family Fun Day. Father Jim Morrison reinvigorated various Catholic student organizations and grew student participation by 200%. A student chapter of the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Daughters resulted

from this growth in student involvement. Father Joey Pilola brought his gift of sign language to our parish, celebrating Mass while signing to the hearing impaired in the congregation. The increased participation in our community by the hearing impaired is another example of how God calls us to embrace differences, understand the needs of others, and live our faith as one people. Father André Melançon has also continued to cultivate a spirit of community, offering several opportunities for students and parishioners to deepen their faith: on Aquinas Night, speakers and creative artists offer wisdom and inspiration. Fr Andre has established Mercy Monday. Every Monday during the regular semester from 8:30am to 4pm, Fr. Andre offers Reconciliation and Adoration in the chapel.

Each pastor has also contributed to improving parish facilities. Father Wilmer Todd was instrumental in the creation of the stained glass windows. Father Charlie Perkins installed the patio canopy and the glass partition wall between the church and the auditorium. Father Alex Francisco repainted and waterproofed the buildings. Father Jay Baker built the storage closet and improved the upstairs living quarters. Father Vic DeLa Cruz was responsible for improvements and upgrades of the building. During this time, the community purchased a 100-year-old Stations of the Cross. Father Jim Morrison built the Common Grounds Café, replaced the kitchen, renovated the office spaces, and improved the outside appearance of the building and grounds with the help of the Knights of Columbus Council.

Father Joey Pilola added the Vocations Office to the facility, which brought additional staff such as the Vocations Administrative Director who moved to the new Diocesan Pastoral Center in May 2010. Also under the leadership of Father Joey, the parish initiated a capital campaign for updates and upgrades to the parish facilities.

St. Thomas, under the leadership of recent pastors, has also fostered these diocesan seminarians: Brice Higginbotham, Patrick Riviere, Nic LeCompte, Joseph Lapeyrouse, and Dyllan Lirette. Recently two of our former Colonel Catholics Maria Mondella and Allison Curth have also entered into religious life. Additionally, other Colonel Catholics are attending seminary in the names of their home dioceses.

Appointed to St. Thomas in his first pastoral post in June 2013, Father André is a former Colonel Catholic. He attended Nicholls State University during the spring and fall of 2003, making St. Thomas Aquinas his home for that year. He considers his year as a student as one of the best years of his life, and the friends he made then are still some of his best friends today. Father André says that, at St. Thomas, he received the direction he needed to pursue his vocation to the priesthood. Now, Father André has come home, bringing his many gifts as pastor to the community. This past year Fr. Andre has completely renovated the Sanctuary with the financial support of many loving parishioners and friends. The floors have been completely redone on the altar. He has replaced the altar, ambo, pulpit, and tabernacle table. Fr Andre has also added a new tabernacle, statues, columns, Crucifix, and candle stand among other items. This past year Fr Andre had a sign installed on the campus side of the church that allows us to advertise events. He has also ordered a sign for the Audubon side that will have mass times on it for anyone driving by to see.

Through the intercession of our patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Community of St. Thomas continues to serve God and all His people in faith, hope, and charity.

Parish Staff

Reverend Mitch Semar † Pastor and Campus Minister
msemar@htdiocese.org

Carolyn "Cissy" Atzenhoffer
Assistant Campus Minister
stacampusministry@htdiocese.org

Cynthia Percle
Administrative Assistant
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Austin Wendt
Manager of the Physical Plant

Eve Evans
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Pastoral Council

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Annie Knight
araek@comcast.net

Finance Council

Mike Chiasson

Terry Evans

Timothy Kearns

Robert Riviere

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m.
Sunday: 10:30 a.m., 7 p.m., 9 p.m.
Monday: 8:00 a.m.
Tuesday- Friday: 12:15 p.m.
First Saturday: 8 a.m.

Reconciliation

30 minutes before each Mass

Eucharistic Adoration

First Saturday: 7 a.m.
Monday: 8:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
Tuesday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
Thursday: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. (Heart to Heart)

Devotions

TBA

Liturgy of the Hours

TBA

Sacramental Preparation

Baptism

Parents who are seeking Baptism for their children are asking that their child be initiated into the Catholic Church and their parish church, St. Thomas Aquinas. The Church baptizes infants and children based upon the faith of their parents. The ideal is that parents have a deep faith, which they actively live out in the experience of the Catholic Church community.

Baptisms at St. Thomas are usually scheduled for Sundays at 11:30 a.m. (after 10:30a.m. Sunday Mass). Baptismal Request Forms can be found online at <http://stthomasthibodaux.org>. Additionally, parents must provide the child's birth certificate. ALL FUTURE SACRAMENTAL RECORDS WILL REQUIRE A COPY OF THE PROVIDED BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE. Keep it in a safe and easily accessible location.

A copy of the original Birth Certificate will be made in the Church Office and the original will be immediately returned. If the parents are not married, they must provide proof of paternity for the father's name to be on the certificate and in the sacramental record. The Church requires a copy of the paternity papers provided by the hospital.

If you are registered at another parish, a letter of permission is requested from your pastor to have your child baptized at St. Thomas Aquinas. All paperwork must be turned in at least one week before Baptism takes place.

Godparents

Families must select a godfather and godmother to assist in raising the child in the faith. Potential Godparents must meet the following Canon Law requirements:

Be a practicing Roman Catholic.

Be sixteen (16) years of age or older.

Be a confirmed Catholic. *A baptized non-Catholic Christian may stand as a Christian witness along with a confirmed Catholic.*

If married, the potential godparent needs to be in a valid sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church. *This can be proved with an updated copy of the person's baptismal certificate (which can be obtained at the church of their Baptism); the godparents are asked to provide this document to the Parish Office.*

A Catholic in an invalid marriage (civil marriage instead of sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church) cannot be a godparent.

A cohabiting (living with someone) Catholic who is not married cannot be a godparent.

First Reconciliation And First Eucharist

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist are celebrated with children in second grade enrolled in CCD for first and second grades. Additionally, any registered parish family with a second grader enrolled in Catholic school celebrates these sacraments in the parish. *Catholic school students attend classes starting the first Monday in Lent through First Eucharist.* As per diocesan policy, sacramental preparation must take place in the parish, not in the school setting.

Online registration forms can be accessed at <http://stthomasthibodaux.org>. Contact Eve Evans at 446.6201 or eevans@htdiocese.org for more information.

Confirmation

For our public school students, the Confirmation preparation begins in 8th grade and continues over the next four years. Catholic school students from registered parish families join sacramental preparation in 10th and 11th grades. As per diocesan policy, sacramental preparation must take place in the parish, not in the school setting, for the two years prior to the Sacrament.

Tuition includes all textbooks and retreat fees. Online registration forms can be accessed at <http://stthomasthibodaux.org>. Contact Eve Evans at 446.6201 or eevans@htdiocese.org for more information.

Potential sponsors can be either the baptismal godparent or another person with whom the candidate shares a close relationship.

Sponsors

Confirmation candidates must select a sponsor to assist in their final preparations for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Potential sponsors must meet the following Canon Law requirements:

Be a practicing Roman Catholic.

Be eighteen (18) years of age or older.

Be a confirmed Catholic.

If married, the potential sponsor needs to be in a valid sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church. *This can be proved with an updated copy of the person's baptismal certificate (which can be obtained at the church of their Baptism); the sponsor is asked to provide this document to the Parish Office.*

A Catholic in an invalid marriage (civil marriage instead of sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church) cannot be a sponsor.

A cohabiting (living with someone) Catholic who is not married cannot be a sponsor.

Matrimony

When planning a wedding in the Catholic Church, the couple cannot schedule a wedding day without first consulting the appropriate clergy at least six (6) months in advance to make definite arrangements.

In order to get married at St. Thomas Aquinas, at least one party should be a registered parishioner. If not, you are required to obtain your pastor's written permission to have your wedding ceremony at St. Thomas Aquinas.

The Diocesan Marriage Policy requires that the prospective bride and groom must meet with a member of the clergy at his/her own church parish at least six (6) months before the desired wedding day. The couple is also required to fulfill and complete the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Program that includes: regular meeting with designated clergy, taking the FOCCUS Assessment Tool, meeting with the FOCCUS Couple Counselors, attending the Pre-Cana Retreat weekend.

Religious Vocations

If you are interested in a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, please contact Father André Melancon at 446.6201 or amelancon@htdiocese.org.

Anointing Of The Sick

The Anointing of the Sick is administered by a priest through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual strength, grace, and comfort during an illness, especially near the time of death. Contact Father André Melancon at 446.6201 to schedule a visit.

Funerals

Contact Cynthia at 446.6201 to make Funeral Mass arrangements.

Ministries Directory

Adult Confirmation

For adults at least 18 years of age who have not participated in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Mark Atzenhoffer..... 637.8008

Altar Servers

Boys and girls in 3rd grade and up who assist the pastor during weekend liturgies. Adult servers are needed for special celebrations.

..... 446.6201

CCD and Confirmation Teachers

Teachers are needed to provide the necessary religious instruction to children of parish families enrolled in public schools.

Eve Evans eevans@htdiocese.org

Children's Liturgy

Teach children in grades kindergarten through 4th during the Liturgy of the Word at the 10:30 a.m. Mass.

Michelle Parr 985.227.7754

Church Cleaning

Parishioners and students in need of service hours are invited to help straighten books, dust, etc. in the chapel, library, offices, and café.

..... 446.6201

Commentators

Make introductions, give information, and welcome the community at Mass.

..... 446.6201

Communion of the Sick

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who wish to minister to the elderly and the ill by bringing Holy Communion.

..... 446.6201

Cook/Bar-B-Que

Bar-B-Que and cook dishes for social events.

..... 446.6201

Donut Ministry

Usually held every Sunday after 10:30 a.m. Mass. Volunteers are welcome

Rachel Husbands 832.797.1329

Eucharistic Adoration

First Saturday: 7 a.m.
Monday: 8:30 a.m.-12:10 p.m., 12:45 p.m.-4 p.m. (during school semester)
Tuesday-Friday: 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. (during school semester)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Lay people, 18 years of age or older, who assist in distributing
Communion at Mass.
..... 446.6201

Finance Council

Advisory council to the pastor. Members respond to the financial needs of the parish by preparing annual parish budgets, reviewing parish financial
report, and advising in other areas as requested by the pastor.
Father Andre Melancon 446.6201
.....amelancon@hdiocese.org

Grounds Keeping and Plant Care

Assist in development and upkeep of grounds and sanctuary plants.
..... 446.6201

Lectors

Proclaim the Word at Mass.
..... 446.6201

Music Ministry

Parishioners with gifts in vocal or instrumental music that they wish to share during Mass or parish events.
..... 446.6201

Not On Bread Alone

Assist in set up, serving, and cleanup of NOBA, a bi-weekly ministry food service to the students, faculty, and staff.
Cissy Atzenhoffer 446.6201

Pastoral Council

Advisory council to the pastor. Members respond to the pastoral needs and cares of the parishioners.
Father Andre Melancon 446.6201

.....amelancon@htdiocese.org

Parish Celebration Team

Plan, coordinate, and set-up parish events such as the St. Joseph Altar and Family Day Picnic.

..... 446.6201

Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA)

Provide a welcoming atmosphere in which any individual interested in becoming Catholic may have their questions answered.

Mark Atzenhoffer..... 637.8008

Repairs

Licensed electricians, licensed plumbers, carpenters, painters, etc.

..... 446.6201

Sacristan

Set up for Mass, clean altar linens.

..... 446.6201

Sewing

Baptismal garments and altar garments.

..... 446.6201

Ushers for Mass

Greet worshippers, supervise seating and Communion, pass collection baskets, and organize the presentation of the gifts.

..... 446.6201

Colonel Catholics

Campus Ministry

Each semester, our Campus Ministry team plans and implements activities in both fellowship and faith for our college-aged parishioners.

Activities and ministries have previously included:

Aquinas Night-We invite amazing Catholics to speak on various aspects of the faith related to college students. The night concludes with Adoration and worship. Don't miss out on these nights!

Christmas Party-The "UGLY" Sweater Christmas Party is always a hit with the Colonel Catholics. Great food, a photo booth with props, a gingerbread house decorating contest, and of course the "White Elephant" gift exchange make the party a blast.

Colonel Awakening-Developed by the Houma-Thibodaux Diocese's own Bishop Emeritus Sam Jacobs, the retreat has spread to colleges throughout the United States. The goal of the weekend is to bring young adults into a personal encounter with Jesus.

End-of-the Year Party-After a long semester, it is time for some "Fun in the Sun" for our Colonel Catholics. Games and a water slide are set up outside and burgers and links of sausage are on the grill. It is just a great way to unwind and relax.

Eucharistic Processions-Several times throughout the year, we hold outdoor processions through campus, praying for our students and consecrating our campus to Christ.

Fall/Spring Retreat-Need an opportunity to get away from the academic world to connect with others and with the Lord at the beach? Activities include Mass, lots of prayer time, and fellowship!

FIRE Retreat-A student lead retreat every Spring semester held at St. Francis in Houma intended to be a continuation of the Awakening experience centered on prayer and the Eucharist.

Halloween Party-Pumpkin carving and costume contest! An opportunity to have a good time!

Jamaica Mission Trip-Every December, we travel to Kingston, Jamaica, to work with the Missionaries of the Poor.

Mercy Monday-All-day Adoration and Reconciliation from
8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Move-In Day-The Colonels Catholics help new students move in and invite them to come and join our community.

Not On Bread Alone-Come by for a delicious lunch and some fellowship every other Thursday during the semester.

Silent retreat-Colonel Catholics take some much needed time just to "let go and let God." With so many assignments, deadlines and tests during the semester, students can enjoy this great time to let the Holy Spirit help them feel renewed.

Tabling in the Union-Tabling is an opportunity for our staff and students to evangelize in the Union. We always have free stuff to give out. Come by our table in the Union and say hello.

Tailgating-We have lots of fun, food, and games before the football games and all under our Colonel Catholic tent located on the student side of the field.

Come out and enjoy time with the Colonel Catholics and cheer on the Colonels.

Valentine's Party-What is a Valentine's Day party without crowning our very own Colonel Catholic Sweetheart and a Colonel Catholic Beau? We also have great food, games, and fellowship.

Virtus Nights- Young Adult males in high school and college. Food, formation, and hangout time. 234 Meandering Way Houma

FOCUS Missionaries@ St. Thomas Aquinas

Mission Statement: To know Christ Jesus and to fulfill His Great Commission.

FOCUS is a Catholic collegiate outreach whose mission is to share the hope and joy of the gospel to college and university students. Trained in Church teaching, prayer, sacred Scripture, evangelization and discipleship, FOCUS missionaries encounter students in friendship where they are, inviting them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and accompanying them as they pursue lives of virtue and excellence. Through Bible studies, outreach events, mission trips and one-on-one discipleship, missionaries inspire and build up students in the faith, sending them out to spread the good news and to live out the Great Commission: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19).

Just some of what these missionaries do:

Focus Bible Studies

SEEK-This January 3-7 in San Antonio, Texas, discover how answering one call can change the entire direction of your life. Join thousands of college students from across the nation who are asking the big questions and refusing to settle for anything less than what God has in store for them.

SLS-The FOCUS Student Leader Summit was a five day event that trained FOCUS student leaders in evangelization, discipleship, small-group Bible studies, and prayer. More specifically, students learned:

how to share a Gospel presentation

how to facilitate conversation in a Bible study

what roles they should play in a Bible study

how to pray for students with which they work

how to pray using Lectio Divina

how to pray using Ignatian Meditation

how to lead someone through the Discipleship Road Map

how to be a servant leader for the people with which they work