

# Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy

## Dress Code Philosophy Statement

Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy developed a dress code to provide an outline of reasonable standards of modesty in dress that would create an environment that promotes virtue during the school day and during events held on behalf of the school, i.e., school dances. In addition, the dress code also promotes a positive universal dress in the student body free from status symbols.

The philosophy and conduct of a Catholic school should reflect gospel values. In the matters of dress and deportment it is the expectation of Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy students and employees to regard dress and deportment without recourse to detailed rules and regulations.

We are all created in the "Image of God". The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good."<sup>7</sup> (CCC 1704)

However, the guidance of a dress code provides a standard foundation for all and rests on principles of modesty, simplicity, and a degree of uniformity. The clothing worn by students and employees of Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy should promote attention to learning and virtue rather than status, fashion, or sexuality. The use of clothing as a means of personal expression, while perhaps appropriate in some contexts, is not fitting for students in a Catholic school. When the soul is robed in virtue, the body needs no adornment. (*Archbishop Fulton Sheen*) Furthermore, it is the goal of Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy to respect the dignity of others. Inappropriate dress causes scandal.

Scandal can be provoked by laws or institutions, by fashion or opinion. (CCC 2286) Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense. (CCC 2284) Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized. It prompted our Lord to utter this curse: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."<sup>86</sup> (2285)

One foundation stone of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the spirit of obedience. By accepting employment or enrolling in Saint Thomas Aquinas Academy, one freely chooses to become subject to several levels of authority. Therefore, compliance to a dress code precedes enforcement; enforcement is only necessary when compliance is denied. Or, in other words, failure of enforcement is no excuse for failure to comply.

"By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil."<sup>9</sup> Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person." (CCC 1706)