



FAITH FORMATION PARENT HANDBOOK 2026 – 2027



Let no one have contempt for your youth,^{} but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. 1 Tm 4:12*

Introduction

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for parents/guardians, students, and catechists involved in all the Faith Formation Programs at St. Clement Catholic Church. The philosophy, goals, policies, guidelines and schedule serve to communicate the content of our Faith Formation Program.

The catechetical formation of each child is a responsibility shared both by the parent and the Parish Faith Formation Program. The goal of Faith Formation is threefold: to present information in the content of our Catholic Christian Faith, to enable formation in the values and attitudes needed to live a Catholic Christian Faith, which leads to the end-goal of transformation and conversion in Jesus Christ.

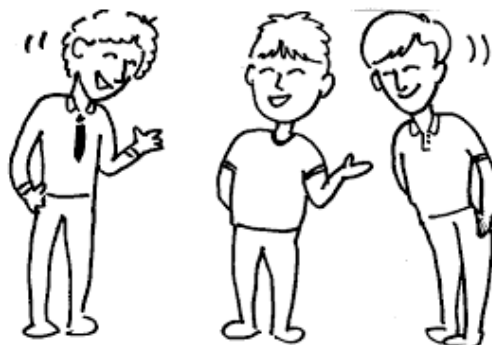
The policies in this handbook give the Director of Religious Education, Parents/guardians, Students, and Catechists a direction in responding to the religious and spiritual needs of parish families.

Rules and regulations are made to help inform the students of the rights and needs of others, as well as to help serve as guide for his/her own acceptable behavior. Rules and regulations create and maintain an environment wherein quality Faith Formation and safety of every child are considered to be of the utmost importance.

Parents and catechists are requested to acquaint themselves as well as the children with the contents of this handbook. Knowledge of the policies and guidelines will help achieve the goals of all of our Life Foundation Programs.

RIGHT TO AMEND:

This handbook is primarily a means of communication. It is meant to provide you the parent/guardian, with helpful information on how we intend to go about our work. St. Clement Life Foundation Office reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary.





Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to St. Clement Faith Formation Program. We are looking forward for your participation and are eager to share our faith with you and your children.

The process is structured with the belief that “families are partners” in the Faith Formation of their children. In order to provide the best possible environment for faith to grow, parents/guardians are expected to regularly participate in Sunday Mass with their children. This practice helps your children to develop their faith-life and to live what they experience in their weekly sessions.

These family guidelines contain general information, as well as policies, that will positively enhance participation and help your child develop the specific attitudes, knowledge, and practices necessary to grow in relationship with their family, the Catholic Christian community, the world, and with God.

We pray that God will be with you and your family in the months ahead. May God, the source of all life, protect you. May God deepen your faith, build up your hope, and constantly increase the gift of love in you. May God keep your children strong in body, in mind and in spirit. May the peace of Christ Jesus abide in your hearts and home.

Sincerely,

Cathy Rosales
Director of Religious Education



Diocese of St. Petersburg Mission & Vision Statement



Mission: The Office of Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation seeks to support the diocesan and local parish efforts to evangelize the people of God and nourish the faith formation of the Church through all ages and phases of life.

Vision: We commit ourselves to promote lifelong faith formation as we:

- **Encounter** Jesus in our lives and foster this encounter in the lives of children, youth and adults.
- **Lead** people to an integration of their Roman Catholic faith with their life experiences.
- **Serve** those who live and minister with people of faith in our local and diocesan communities.

Our professional and administrative staff seek to provide assistance, in-service and training to our parish colleagues who assist the faithful of all ages to learn about their faith, grow in Catholic Christian witness and service, prepare for and celebrate the sacraments and liturgies of the Church, understand and live the moral teachings of the Catholic-Christian community and foster this lifelong discipleship with prayer and spiritual practices that will sustain the faithful for life now, and prepare them for eternal life with God.

St Clement Church Mission Statement

We at St. Clement are Trinity Centered and Discipleship Driven. Discipleship making is meant to be a KEY focus of our church, involves learning and living the Five Habits of Intentional Discipleship, which are the FOUNDATION of being: “Trinity Centered and Discipleship Driven.

FAITH FORMATION STAFF

PASTOR.....Fr. Felipe Gonzalez

PAROCHIAL VICAR.....Fr. Vijay Polamarasetty

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS ED.....Cathy Rosales
cathy@stclementpc.org 813-752-8251 Ext. 304

CONFIRMATION/YOUTH MINISTRY DIRECTORMyriam Reyna
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CLASS ELIGIBILITY

Catechesis of Good Shepherd (CGS)

CGS I & II is a Ministry for children 3 years through 9 years old in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant. We use the methods and insights of Maria Montessori, using hands-on, developmentally appropriate materials that put the *Scriptures and Liturgy* into the hand of the child with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Please see the DRE, if you would like any additional information or need to register your child, sessions start in October.

Upper Grades (1st-5th)

We generally will place children in the formation program in the same grade in which they are in their regular school program. If a child for whatever reason has progressed at a different pace in regular school, but has previously participated in the St. Clement Program, a determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Baptism

The **Order of Christian Initiation for Children (OCIA)** is a faith formation process designed for children ages 7 through 17 who have reached the age of reason and are Unbaptized and seeking to become Catholic.

The OCIA process helps children and their families grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and develop an understanding of the Catholic faith. Through prayer, Scripture, catechesis, liturgical celebrations, and participation in parish life, children are gradually prepared to receive the Sacraments of Initiation.

Children participate in sessions that are appropriate for their age and developmental level while following a process that parallels the adult OCIA journey. Parents or guardians play an essential role and are encouraged to actively support their child's faith formation and participation.

Sacramental Preparation

We require children who will be receiving the sacraments of **First Penance, First Holy Communion, or Confirmation** to have a minimum of two current, consecutive years of religious education instruction. The first year of instruction may have been in a Faith Formation Program, Catholic School, or registered homeschool program. Thereafter, the child may be eligible for a sacramental preparation class.

At St. Clement, children are eligible to receive their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion as early as 7 years of age or 2nd grade and to be eligible for Confirmation program child must be in 8th grade and at least 13 years of age. Parents will be required to attend special meetings; will receive Sacramental Packages to review and work with your children at home. **SPECIAL NOTICES WILL BE SENT HOME WITH STUDENTS INVOLVED IN FIRST COMMUNION & CONFIRMATION PREPARATION.**

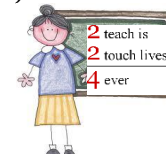
Youth Ministry

The Middle & High School Youth Ministry welcomes students in grades 6th & 7th, they meet in the Middle School Center and High School (9th -12th grades), meet in the Youth Center; both meet on Wednesdays from 6:30-7:45pm. Please contact **Myriam Reyna** at (813) 752-8251 at x323 or by email mreyna@stclementpc.org. for *the yearly calendar* or for more information.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PARENTS

Attending Mass

Catholics are called upon to participate in Mass every Sunday and every Holy Day of Obligation. You model your faith for your children daily. What your child will learn at Faith Formation Class depends on your support and reinforcement at home your domestic church. Learning about our Catholic faith cannot be done only during class time, **We encourage families to attend Mass together as a family.** Your interest and encouragement let your child know you value what is being done in the Faith Formation class. The 11:00am Sunday Mass is an ideal Mass time for families as it is right after Faith Formation Class, but families are free to choose whatever Mass time suits their individual needs. **Parents should know, however, that Sunday class is never a substitute for Mass.**



EXPECTATIONS

PARENTS: As role models and primary faith educators, parents are encouraged to:

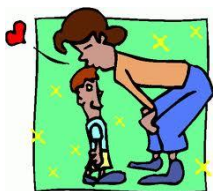
- ❖ Worship together as a family, including **regular attendance at weekend Masses.**
- ❖ Ensure that your children attend classes regularly and on time.
- ❖ Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect the children within the classroom.
- ❖ Be an active part of your children's learning and be involved in the classroom at the catechist's request (e.g., help with special and/or service projects).
- ❖ Attend meetings and Sacrament gatherings.
- ❖ Smoking is **ONLY** permitted in the parking lot.



STUDENTS-RESPECT FOR OTHERS/CLASSROOM RULES

This code is used in conjunction with existing local or diocesan policies, protocols or other codes and is not intended to supersede them. The learning environment at any session/class sponsored by the Faith Formation Office will take to heart the need to provide a safe, enjoyable environment for all students/parents who will be involved. The Catechists and Staff will treat each and every participant with the dignity, love, and care that they deserve as the creations of God that they are. In any instance where a child is under the supervision of a Catechist/Adult Volunteer in association with Faith Formation Ministries, all participants will be treated as is described in our Safe Environment standards document.

1. Students are taught and expected to respect the sanctity of life and uniqueness of all persons. This means that:



- a. Differences among all people are to be accepted and respected as Jesus has taught. Children are taught and expected to be mindful of their words and actions, so they are not a source of pain to others.
 - b. Teachers deserve full support and cooperation. This includes listening, following directions, and participating in the activities of the class by all students.
- Any words or actions which show disrespect for the dignity of a person will not be permitted.

2. Students are expected to have a responsible and Christian attitude regarding proper attire and decorum while on church property.
- Students will not be permitted to wear inappropriate clothing or hats, or chew gum.
 - Telephones or other electronic devices not required for class are not permitted. Any electronic device will be kept in a visible area (prayer table, for example) and returned to the student when class ends.
3. Respect for parish/school property should reflect a sense of good stewardship. Respect toward property, whether the parish's, another student's, or a student's own, is required at all times.
4. Students who interfere with others' rights to achieve the above goals by being disrespectful or persistently disruptive will be brought to the faith formation office. The Director will speak to the student and see how they can resolve the issue. If it continues and the student needs to be brought to the office 3 times, then the parent will receive a phone call and the child will need to be picked up.



ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance at Faith Formation classes is an important factor in deepening a child's understanding of our God through **Prayer**, the **Study** of Scripture and Church teaching, **Serve**, **Evangelization** and **Community**. Child **MUST** have at least 75% of attendance (present or by make up work). All work for Faith at Home must be completed & handed in no later than April 30. If a student has three (3) consecutive, unexcused absences, a Faith Formation representative will be in touch with the parent(s)/guardian. Students with perfect attendance for the entire year will receive some kind of recognition for their great effort and responsibility.



TARDIES: Late arrivals are discouraged as they are disruptive to the class. Children notice and adopt our attitudes about time and priorities. Arriving late interrupts the class and is unfair to the Catechist and the students who come at the appointed time. Parents of students who are consistently late will be notified.





Harassment Policy for Non-Employment Situations in Schools/Centers, Parish Faith Formation and Parish Youth Ministry Programs of the Diocese of St. Petersburg

POLICY:



The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic school or early childhood center establish and adopt this policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the Establishment of a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with Faith Formation programs, schools and early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish, school, or early childhood center-sponsored event.

CHILD ABUSE: Child abuse is of serious concern. Parents need to be informed that, consistent with diocesan policy and local legal codes, parish catechetical staff has a moral and legal duty to comply with the law to ensure the welfare of a child. Any staff member or catechist who suspects a child to be a victim of child abuse will notify the program coordinator who will then notify the Pastor. Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow diocesan policy on such matters. All staff members and catechists are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have read and understand the ethical and personal conduct policies of their diocese.



PURPOSE OF THE POLICY:

- ❖ That each individual is free from physical, psychological or verbal intimidation and harassment in the schools, early childhood centers, Faith Formation and youth ministry settings.
- ❖ That each individual involved in schools, early childhood centers, Faith Formation and youth ministry programs maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given dignity;
- ❖ To encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status or disability.

This policy is not intended to otherwise limit the expectation of staff, children, students, and volunteers to engage fully in the traditions of teaching, celebrating, participating in and being formed by the Catholic faith, including but not limited to curriculum, catechesis, the Sacraments, other liturgies, worship services and ministries.

How we can we protect our children from child molesters?

To protect our children, we must establish and maintain open lines of communication so that they feel free to report any inappropriate or worrisome contact with adults and children. We must educate our children to enable them to understand what abuse is and they have the right to resist any offensive contact.



What are the “Three Rs” of Youth Protection?

The “Three Rs” of Youth Protection convey a simple message that adults should enable youth to learn:

- **Recognize** situations that place him or her at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone could be a molester.
- **Resist** unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.
- **Report** attempted or actual molestation to a parent or another trusted adult. This prevents further abuse and helps protect other children. Let the child know that he or she will not be blamed for what occurred.

EXPLANATION OF HARASSMENT:

Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or communication.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical, mental or verbal abuse
2. Insults, jokes, or derogatory slurs based on one or more of an individual's protected status(es)
3. Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
4. Implicit or explicit requests for sexual favors
5. Unwanted sexual comments (serious or humorous)
6. Unwanted sexually suggestive telephone calls, letters, e-mails, etc.
7. Comments or jokes based on issues of modesty and developing social awareness
8. Unwanted forced involvement in activities (e.g., physical, religious, etc.)
9. Coercion of religious styles or personal beliefs upon a participant
Intimidation in front of a group or forced personal sharing in groups
Inappropriate media or music use which would violate this policy

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The right to confidentiality, both complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible, but will be consistent with legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

SPECIAL NEEDS: Parents are requested to list any health concerns of a student on the registration form. This information will be kept on record and will be communicated to the appropriate Catechists.

MEDICATIONS:

The office will not dispense medication for the parents. If a student requires medication during class time; the parent must come to the office to administer the medication.

COMMUNICATION:

We are here to serve the Faith Formation needs of our children, youth, and adults. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please feel free to share them with your child's catechist or call the DRE Cathy Rosales at 752-8251 Ext. 304)

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES



St Clement Church is committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff, parents and visitors. We work closely with district and local safety officials – *police, fire, emergency medical services, and public health* – in order to ensure our school is well prepared for an emergency. We have developed procedures that serve as a guide to help staff and our public safety partners respond swiftly should a crisis occur at our Church.



EMERGENCY CLOSING: Weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances sometime require the cancellation of classes. The Faith formation policy regarding Hurricanes and inclement weather will follow county protocols. If the county school system is closed, so are we.



As a parent, how can you prepare for a school emergency?

Provide accurate emergency contact information (including email) to office and notify the church if this information changes.



What is *Lockdown and Shelter in place* and how will I know if a church is in a *Lockdown or Shelter in place*?

“Lockdown” is a common church security practice used to secure a building. It will be implemented in the event of a campus emergency or crisis that requires students and staff to seek safety within the building. During this type of emergency, the safest place for students is locked securely in their classrooms inside the school building. All outside doors and all classroom doors will be locked if the Ed Center is in Lockdown. During a Lockdown, *no one* except uniformed law enforcement will be allowed to enter the building. *This means that parents will not be admitted and students will not be released to parents while the school is under Lockdown.* No one will leave the building unless under the direction of emergency responders or until after local authorities give the all clear.

As the situation demands, the school may be put under a “Shelter-in-Place” order. This procedure is used in the event that a threat is possible, but not imminent. All outside doors will be locked if the school is in Shelter-in-Place. Classes and movement within the church will carry on as usual with the exception that no students or staff will be permitted to leave the building. As in a Lockdown, *no one* except uniformed law enforcement will be allowed to enter the building. ***This means that parents will not be admitted and students will not be released to parents while the school is under a Shelter-in-Place.***

What will my child experience during a Lockdown or Shelter-in-Place?

A Lockdown or Shelter-in-Place begins with an announcement instructing all students to either remain in the building and/or remain in the room that they are in or immediately enter the nearest classroom which is manned by a staff member. During a Lockdown, students remain in their locked classrooms while authorities secure the school. During a Shelter-in-Place, students carry on activities inside the school while all students and staff are required to stay inside the building. When authorities are confident the building is secure, an all-clear announcement will be made.



If the Church is evacuated, how will I be able to locate my child?

Evacuation procedures are implemented during an emergency situation, such as a fire, hurricane, storm or other disaster, when it is determined that students and staff will be safer outside the building or at a location away from the campus. If at all safe and possible, we will assemble the students in the Cronin Hall. Catechists and staff will take accountability and assess any causality in preparation to provide information and turn over operations to local authorities.

Parents or guardians will be notified through the automated REMIND system (Church Texting). They will be directed to a specific location where they will be required to show proper identification. Remember, a student can only be released to a parent/guardian or an adult who is documented as an emergency contact. If you are a non-custodial parent, you must be listed in your child's emergency contact information as a guardian and you must show proper identification. At that time, we will require you to sign an emergency release to document that your child was discharged to your custody.



St. Clement church is prepared for an emergency.

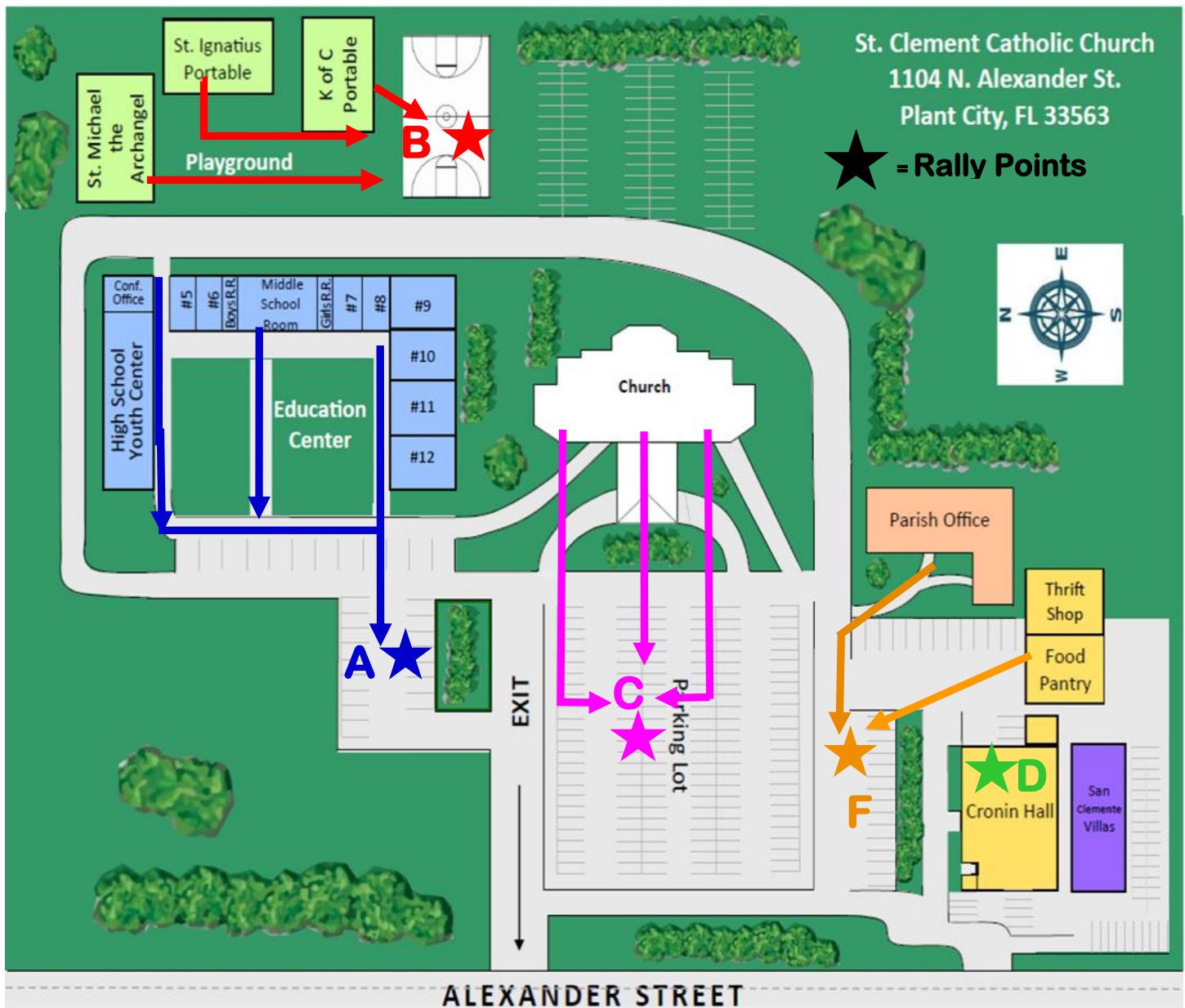
As a parent/catechist, you should feel confident in knowing that we provide, on an annual basis, emergency response training to all church personnel. We have identified staff members with assigned roles and responsibilities to perform during an emergency. We WILL conduct emergency drills during Faith Formation, so that students and staff are aware of the most effective and safe emergency responses.



IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

Ensuring school safety is everyone's responsibility – staff, students, parents and the entire community. Please report any safety concerns you may have to your school principal.





**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY,
PLEASE FOLLOW EVACUATION ROUTES**

- ⇒ **ALL Education Center Classrooms go to Rally Point A**
- ⇒ **ALL Portables go to Rally Point B**
- ⇒ **Main Church go to Rally Point C**
- ⇒ **Parish Offices, MBK go to Rally Point F**
- ⇒ **If it's not safe at your Rally point, immediately go to Rally point D Cronin Hall**
- ⇒ **Take the nearest and safest exit from the building where you are located.**
- ⇒ **Go to the Rally Point assign to you, and stay there until further notice**