

**SAINT ALPHONSUS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
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ADVISORY BOARD

Angie Pascente (Chair)	Open
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Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children & parents.

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2226]

"... ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

Jesus invites us to knock, ask and find.

We journey as a community: beginning with the family and expanding to a life of shared faith, worship and service to others.

We accompany our children on their journeys so that they too will know, love and trust God.

We witness the growth and development of our children as they learn to trust God through Jesus whom they recognize in everyday life.

Faith is a deepening relationship that can't be found in any book. It is more than a set of truths, teachings or doctrines. Biblical stories, liturgy, prayer, and the example of dedicated people form a belief system that nurtures and nourishes faith.

Together, parents and catechists share faith, inspire its growth in our children, and discover growth in ourselves. Together, we seek, we knock, and we ask.

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

St. Alphonsus Parish is a Catholic Faith-family rooted in history and growing with the community. We strive to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God by our participation in the areas of Prayer, Education, Service, Social Activities, and Worship. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to Christ's call, "Come Follow Me!" Thus as families, we are...welcoming, creating, serving, healing, sharing, reaching out.

ST. ALPHONSUS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The seed of a rich and deep spirituality is present within each child. In their earliest years, children grow in relationship with God and understanding of their faith. It is our mission to help parents in their responsibility to nurture their children's faith. Faith is based not only on an intellectual understanding of doctrine, but also on a conversion of the heart (adopting a way of life).

We proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God through prayer, education, service, social activities and worship. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to Christ's call to "Come Follow Me", and carry on his teaching mission. We follow Jesus' example of teaching what to believe and then showing how to put those beliefs into practice.

Our purpose is to assist parents in:

- Teaching a Catholic way of life: laying the foundations for developing Christian attitudes, values and behavior in their children's early years;
- Presenting religious concepts in accord with their children's age and capacity for understanding and growth in faith;
- Helping their children make an increasingly personal response to God through their unique gifts; [best achieved through faith sharing & prayer]
- Integrating liturgical and eucharistic formation with religious education [Liturgical celebrations shape a child's faith every bit as much as Catholic schooling];
- Nurturing growth by providing a proper environment and witness of other adults;
- Fostering a sense of community, and belonging; [Faith is something to be lived and is lived best in community]
- Recognizing and fulfilling their role as the first and foremost catechists of their children.

Our agenda is *conversion*, leading to *discipleship*, within the context of *community*.

COMMON POLICIES

ASSESSMENTS

Quizzes should be given throughout the year to provide feedback to the catechists. A final written assessment on the grade-level core objectives will be given during the 18th or 19th session. You will be provided with a study guide to work with your child. If your child performs poorly on the assessment, then his/her catechist will review the questions orally with your child to determine the level of understanding. Cases where it is evident that a student does not have adequate understanding of content for their grade-level will be reported to the DRE. The DRE will contact the student's parents to determine a further course of action. Twice during the course of the program year you will receive the catechist's assessment of your child's participation and learning. You will be invited to participate in this process. The reports will be distributed through the classroom

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential to successful performance. Both RE and home have the responsibility to encourage regularity of attendance. It is parents' responsibility to report absences to the Religious Education office at 257-2371. The parents of children missing from class without notice will be called to verify that the children are safe at home, and to remind them of class being held at that time. Missed work must be completed. A student who has more than **4** absences will have to make up the missed work, as well as attend the missed session on another track. The student's readiness to go on to the next grade level will be assessed by the catechist, director, and pastor.

CLASS SESSIONS

Meeting Times

- *Track A*—begins at 8:45am on Sundays with dismissal at 10:15am.
- *Track B*---begins at 4:30pm on Mondays with dismissal at 6:00pm
- *Track C* – begins at 6:00pm on Wednesdays with dismissal at 7:30pm.

Please Note: Refer to the Track Schedules for exact dates of classes.

Classrooms

Grades 6, 7, and 8 generally meet in the Parish Center using the Walnut Street entrance. The largest upper class may also use the Church Hall. All other grades meet in the RE Building.

BIBLES

Children 4th Grade and up are required to bring an NAB Bible to class. There are two kinds of Bibles available for purchase from the Religious Education Office. One is the Catholic Youth Study Bible, which includes illustrations, maps, notes, origins of Catholic Traditions, etc., for \$25.00. We also have the basic NAB Bible for \$6.00.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

If inclement weather or other emergency situations require that classes be canceled, you can check with the Emergency Closing Center at www.emergencyclosingcenter.com

COMMUNICATION

There should always be an open line of communication among parents, catechists, and administration. Catechists are asked to keep parents apprised of what is going on in class. We want to create a partnership between the classroom catechist and you (the at-home catechists). Your child's catechist will

provide you with a summary of what is going on in class and what she/he is attempting to accomplish after each session. The Director should always be made aware of parental concerns or student needs.

DISCIPLINE

Good conduct, cooperation, attention and courtesy are expected during class time. Sometimes children fail to live up to their own and adults' expectations. If students become unmanageable and are disruptive to the class, they will be sent to the RE Office. The parent(s) will be notified. After the third incident, we will request a meeting with the parent(s), and home instruction will be considered.

The essence of Christian discipline is self-discipline. Children learn that the observance of rules is a safeguard to their liberties, and not a curbing of them. We ask your cooperation in maintaining an efficient and consistent form of discipline from the outset, so that the steps above need not be taken.

EARLY DISMISSAL

When a child is required by the parent to leave class early, **a note must be sent to the office**. Children are not allowed to leave the building unescorted while classes are in session. We ask that the parent request early dismissal for important situations only because it is disruptive to the class, as well as to the child's education.

FIELD TRIPS OR RETREATS

If a class plans a field trip or retreat, parents will be notified and written permission will be requested. Students will not be allowed to participate in these trips without written parental consent, and they will be given an alternative equitable assignment.

HOMEWORK

Homework is not mandatory for every session. However, since religious education is essentially indoctrination into a way of life, and parents have the primary responsibility for guiding their children's lives, homework will be assigned. It is important that parents review with their children what they are learning.

LITURGY OF THE MASS

"As members of the Christian community, all are called to participate actively in the liturgical prayer of the Church. Religious Education therefore must involve the student in his/her faith community and in that community's liturgy. Liturgy itself educates, it teaches, it forms community, and it forms the individual. It makes possible worship of God." (NCCB, "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education"). The Mass is the focus of our public worship of God and the focus of our parish worshipping community. Families have committed in writing to regularly attend Mass as part of our RE program. Once a month, one of our RE grades will sponsor a weekend Mass. Children of the sponsoring grade will experience various roles of liturgical ministry (greeters, ushers, lectors, dressing the altar, bringing up the gifts, etc.)

We also have Children's Liturgy of the Word once a month as part of liturgical formation for children.

MEDICATION

Except in extraordinary circumstances, which must be approved by the director of the program, personnel within the Religious Education Program will not maintain, supervise the taking of, or administering of medication.

PARENTAL CONCERNS AND PROCEDURES

A parent who has a question or concern regarding a situation involving a student is urged to follow these procedures:

1. Contact the student's catechist to discuss the situation and work with the catechist to arrive at possible solutions.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the catechist, the parent should then request a conference with the Director of Religious Education. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director will act as a facilitator, making every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution and reconciliation have not been achieved after discussion with the catechist and the Director, and the parent still feels the issue has not been addressed, the pastor may be asked to assist in the resolution and reconciliation of the problem.

Every effort should be made to resolve questions, concerns, and problems at the earliest possible stage in a manner appropriate for Christians.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In sending your child to the St. Alphonsus Religious Education Program, you are asked to contribute to, accept, and support the philosophy, goals and objectives of the program. Every parent, catechist, and Office of Religious Education make a written commitment to the program when a family first registers so that there is a clear understanding of the expectations between all parties working together in the program. [See the Commitment of Mutual Agreements form for specific commitments.]

The faith life of St. Alphonsus will grow only as the faith life of each family is enlightened and enriched by the gospel message of Jesus and each family lives out this reality as best it can. The family that lives in relationship with God becomes a living expression of the Gospel. Growth in spirituality by a parent or parents overflows into lived family life. Growing in faith takes on a new meaning when a family claims time for prayer, worship, faith sharing, symbol making and ritual.

REGISTRATION POLICY

Application packets for the next program year will be given to your youngest child by the 19th session. We ask you to fill out and return your application at the last session. 50% of tuition and fees are due with the application. The balance is due by the first session in September. If you are financially unable to make payment at that time, submit the completed application with a request for late payment or pay plan. No child will be turned away because of finances. An early registration discount can be realized if the admission application is received prior to the deadline stated on the application. Assignment to the three tracks will be on a first-come-first-serve basis in the event of significant disparities between the sizes of the classes.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

The mission of the REAB is to support the Director of Religious Education in the development and integration of effective religious education practices. Through research, evaluation and recommendations, the Advisory Board meets on a monthly basis to assist the Director in ensuring our students receive the highest caliber of educational opportunities, spiritual growth and quality care in a loving and Christian environment.

SACRAMENT PREPARATION

Reconciliation and Eucharist

In Reconciliation, we have an opportunity for healing and righting our relationship with God and with each other. In the Eucharist, Jesus invites us to join Him in this meal with the Christian community.

The child must be baptized in order to receive the sacraments. A copy of the Baptismal Certificate must be provided even if the child was baptized here at St. Alphonsus. The child must have a basic understanding of the person and mission of Jesus, a desire to receive the Eucharist, and an ability to know the difference between ordinary bread and the Eucharist. Parents are responsible to have their child regularly attend first and second grade religious education classes and weekend Masses, as well as attend all parent meetings themselves, where possible.

Confirmation

The candidates are called to express commitment to the Catholic faith, to reaffirm the promises of Baptism, and to realize that faith development is a life-long process. They must be knowledgeable about the basic teachings of the Church, have a personal desire to receive the sacrament, participate fully in the program through regular attendance, and participate in service projects and all class activities, including the retreat. Parents are reminded of the importance they play in fostering a religious attitude in their children through their own values, religious practices, and encouragement.

SERVICE PROJECTS: Grade-level

To teach our children the meaning of Christian service, catechists for each grade (1-7) decide on a service project for their students to participate in. If a child does not participate with classmates in the project, then he or she should engage in his or her own service project under the supervision a parent. A report on the project should be presented to the catechist or the class.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Worship with the parish community each week at Saturday or Sunday Eucharist.
- Attend each grade level in grades 1-8 for ongoing faith formation.
- Attention and regular participation in class. This is necessary in order to learn the required doctrine, scriptures, liturgical knowledge, and prayers, as well as to being receptive to the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. Students must demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts being taught at each grade level in order to proceed to the next level. These concepts are included in this handbook to assist parents in their role as at-home catechists.
- If absent, arrangements should be made to complete missed classwork at home.
- They are expected to respect the materials in the classroom and church property.

SUPERVISION

We are responsible for the children only during the regularly scheduled class sessions. We do not accept responsibility for those children dropped off early, not picked up promptly, or who are part of a car pool. We do ask catechists through third grade to hold their students in the classroom until parents or older siblings come into the building and pick them up.

VISITORS

Students are permitted to bring guests to class, provided a note from the host parent accompanies the student to class. This note should indicate that the guest has your permission to be at the class. We trust that you will notify the guest's parent that this has been part of their child's visit with your family. Visitors without such permission will not be allowed in the classroom. Parents, of course, are welcome to visit their child's class at any time.

TUITION POLICY

Tuition for the program year helps to cover costs for books, supplies, salaries, utilities, etc. (See below for a more complete listing of costs). If a family finds itself unable to meet the cost of tuition due to financial difficulties, special arrangements can be made with the RE Office at 630-257-2371, kcody-stals@comcast.net. If a family has a balance remaining at the end of the program year, that family will be required to meet with the director in order to register for the next program year. If the youngest child in the program is in 8th Grade, then the child will not be able to be confirmed until the balance is paid.

Tuition & Parishioner Status

Our tuition rates are based on participants in program being active supporting parishioners. We also have tuition rates for out-of-parish participants that are higher. Tuition rates for active supporting parishioners are lower because they contribute to the parish, which allows the parish to partially subsidize the program. The parish subsidy to the religious education program helps to defray the actual cost of tuition for each student. Accordingly, it is expected that an "active supporting parishioner" attends Mass on a regular basis and contributes to his/her parish through the use of the offertory envelopes. And it is expected that anyone who is not an active supporting parishioner will not be eligible for the subsidized rates, but will fall under the out-of-parish/non-supporting rates.

To assess if an RE family qualifies for active parishioner status, the RE Office will do the following:

- Review offertory envelope use from October through January.
- If there is not a regular use of the envelopes, then a notice will be sent by mid-February explaining that the family's status is considered "non-supporting". It will be charged at the higher tuition rates for the upcoming program year unless it begins to use its envelopes on a regular basis. 8th Graders who are the only child in the program will not be eligible for Confirmation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXPENSES

Salaries & Benefits

- 1 Full-time, 1 Part-time Staff
- 1 Part-time Maintenance
- Staff & Catechist Professional Development

Supplies

- Student Textbooks, Supplementary materials, & Catechist Manuals
- Tapes, CD's, DVD's
- Pens, Pencils, Crayons, Markers, Chalk, Scissors, Glue, Construction Paper
- Crafts

Copier Cost, Maintenance & Supplies

Audio-Visual Equipment for each classroom

Furnishings

Catechist Resource/Reference Library

Postage

Handbooks, Programs, Certificates

- First Reconciliation
- First Communion

- Confirmation
- Retreats & Service Projects
- Building
- Heating & A/C
 - Electricity
 - Phone
 - Repairs
- Property /Casualty Insurance

ST. ALPHONSUS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

COMMITMENT OF MUTUAL AGREEMENTS

As Catholics and Christians, we are on a faith journey to seek, to know, and to follow our Savior. Our common goal as parents and catechists is to work together to do all we can to actively strengthen and stimulate the spiritual and moral growth of our children. As parents, we are our children's *primary* religious teachers and role models. This is an awesome responsibility. Catechists supplement the knowledge, direction and example provided by parents.

PARENTS' COMMITMENT

Among the ways we parents agree to live our commitment and nurture our child's growth is by:

1. regularly attending weekly parish worship with our child(ren). We recognize and accept fully that our attendance at Mass is an integral part of the religious education of our child(ren);
2. actively supporting the parish by contributing through weekly parish envelopes, thereby helping to offset the cost of the religious education program provided by the parish;
3. using the children's offertory envelopes to teach stewardship, and as a means of gauging attendance;
4. being examples of prayer and Christian living in the home;
5. attending all parent meetings scheduled during the year;
6. ensuring that our child(ren) attends each class when possible;
7. reinforcing class activities with home discussion;
8. abiding by the spirit and expectations of the Parent Handbook.

CATECHIST'S COMMITMENT

Among the ways we volunteer catechists agree to fulfill our commitment to further our child(ren)'s growth is to:

1. properly prepare for each class in order to attain program objectives;
2. notify absent students of missed classwork and homework assignments;
3. partner with parents by keeping them apprised of what is covered in class
4. foster a classroom environment where questions, discussions and suggestions are welcomed and concerns addressed;
5. strive to treat the children fairly and to respect their individual faith journeys;
6. invite parental participation and maintain open communication;
7. teach the consistent Catholic faith and traditions as expressed in our rituals, practices and Christian living;
8. meet and partner with the other grade-level catechists & core catechist on scheduled dates;
9. continue my personal religious education and actively give expression of my faith in my daily life;

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITMENT

1. listen to the concerns and suggestions of parents & students; and properly consider them when making decisions;
2. respond to inquiries in a timely manner;
3. inform and provide catechists (volunteers & parents) with opportunities for continuing education and faith development;
4. seek the active participation of a religious education advisory board comprised of parents and catechists in our efforts to continually evaluate and improve the program, formulate policies, and seek new ways to nurture the faith of participating children and families.

WE COMMIT TO LIVING OUT THESE AGREEMENTS FULLY AND ASK FOR GOD'S HELP AND GUIDANCE TO GIVE OUR BEST FOR OUR CHILDREN, FAMILY AND PARISH.

_____ Father's Signature		_____ Mother's Signature	
_____ Student Name	_____ Student Name	_____ Student Name	_____ Student Name
_____ Catechist Signature	_____ Catechist Signature	_____ Catechist Signature	_____ Catechist Signature
_____ Kevin J. Cody, Director		_____ Rev. Brian Ardagh, Pastor	