

**SAINT ALPHONSUS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
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Vacancy (2)

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.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Parent,

As director, I am grateful for the privilege of working with you parents in bringing your children to a closer relationship with God. You show your children the importance of religious instruction by enrolling them in our programs. Your children also see that prayer and worship are an essential part of their spiritual lives by attending Mass together. It is encouraging to see so many take their Christian parental responsibilities seriously.

This year, we are taking as our theme the theme chosen by the US bishops for Catechetical Sunday: **“Matrimony: Sacrament of Enduring Love.”**

With all of the mixed messages children receive about marriage, we will focus on providing the Church’s perspective of marriage as a sacred union and sacrament. The bishops point out that the presence of the Lord Jesus at the Wedding at Cana (see Jn 2) underlines with great force the importance of marriage as a sign that helps us understand the mission of Jesus. God comes in person to seal his covenant of enduring and fruitful love with his people. The love of Christ for us, for his Church, is an intimate union of generous love, it is an enduring love, and it is a fruitful love. The Lord invites us all, whether married or not, to contemplate the generous, faithful, and fruitful love made visible in Christian married life, so that we might perceive through this sign what the love of God is about. And by means of this grace of seeing, we are strengthened to follow with greater courage our most high calling, that sublime vocation to love in truth, revealed to us in the person and mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our mission then, as catechists carrying on the mission of Jesus, is to introduce our children to Christ and permit them to fall in love. With a classroom model of religious education, it is natural to fall into an emphasis on learning the facts of our faith. While it is important to have an understanding of our faith and who God is, our task in religious education also includes leading people into relationship with God. How do you develop a relationship with anyone, but by conversing with one another? So it is with God...We grow in love with God through prayer. As parents, one of our important roles in this “matchmaking” endeavor between Christ and our children is to pray as a family. Our Faith First textbooks have a unit devoted to prayer, as well as having a page at the end of every chapter, entitled *With My Family*, that includes a section with ideas on prayer.

I would like to thank the members of our advisory board for being there to come up with, and act as a sounding board for, new ideas. I’d like to particularly thank our outgoing chair, Debbie Kornacker, and our new chair, Melanie Terrazas.

In recent years, we have been fortunate to have over 90% of our catechists return, so, we have a great group of volunteer catechists! However, we are at one of those years when for a group of catechists who have served for a number of years, it is time to move on. These include Diane Kaye, Cathy Kuba, Brian Sullivan, Sherri Rodriguez, and Diana Stryczula. We are grateful for such dedicated service! We are also in need of people to answer the call to this ministry and fill in the vacancies left by these people who, like you, at one time wondered if they could do it. May God continue to bless us in teaching the Gospel message and fulfilling God's command to teach all nations

Kevin J. Cody, DRE
Director

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 17th or 18th 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 9:45am on Sundays with dismissal at 11:15am.
- *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 will 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 \$20.00. 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 an 8:30 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.