



PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND CORE PRINCIPLES

St. Alphonsus Church's mission statement "*Love God – Love Others – Make Disciples*" is based upon what Jesus had to say about the mission of the Church:

- You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. ~ Matthew 22:37, 39-40
- Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. ~ Matthew 28:19-20

Canon Law states that "Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents, and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation" (Can. 774 S2). The General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis resound the same sentiment. St. Alphonsus Parish Religious Education Program recognizes and embraces parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children as they strive to fulfill this special role. Our mission is to assist parents in providing sound catechesis on the faith of the Catholic tradition. This is accomplished by providing parents with a variety of resources and programs that will enable their children to cultivate a deep appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian in today's changing world. St. Alphonsus PREP provides children with ample opportunities to live and experience their faith through catechesis.

To achieve our mission, the core principles listed below form the foundation and strength of our Religious Education Programs. Through the application of these core

principles, it is our hope that we assist parents in cultivating their hearts, minds and souls, and those of their children in order to become the person God has called and created them to be.

- ✚ To nurture and develop the dignity of the individual as a unique child of God who is created in His image and likeness and a reflection of His goodness.
- ✚ To instill in each individual a faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and foster a committed response to His love as intentional disciples.
- ✚ To present the doctrine of the Catholic faith as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- ✚ To live in awareness that sacramental life is central to expressing our love for God that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith.
- ✚ To seek the Lord's infinite mercy, love, and the very gift of Himself in the sacraments of Penance (Reconciliation) and Eucharist (Communion).
- ✚ To cultivate a reverence for God's Word and an understanding of how God uses His Word to speak to us.
- ✚ To seek the example of Mary and the Saints as they model for us how we can become the Saint God has called and created each of us to be.
- ✚ To develop the individual's moral life through sound catechesis that properly forms the conscience through the practical application of the Gospel message, Commandments, Beatitudes, and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- ✚ To embrace the virtues as the key to living our daily life as Catholic Christians.
- ✚ To foster communion with God through prayer, and devotions that are experienced through participation in our programs.
- ✚ To realize the profound truth that God has created all things for His glory and honor and that the dignity of creation and especially the human person need to be respected accordingly.

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION FOR IN-PERSON PREP CLASSES

Faith formation begins at home and through their Catholic witness, parents give their children their first experiences of God and the community of faith called the Church. This influences the way in which the St. Alphonsus Religious Education Program walks with children on their faith journey, instills in them the knowledge of the faith, and prepares them for the reception of the sacraments. The director, catechists and volunteers of our PREP program support this development in the Prep classroom. Your help in the areas listed below will allow us to work in a unified way to make your child's PREP experience positive, productive and meaningful:

- **Family participation in four faith formation events:** In addition, each family must attend one Lenten event, time TBD.
- Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.
- Teach your child/ren to pray in their own words as well as to learn the prayers required at their level (as well as review previous learned prayers).
- Ask your child about their class and please continue to check your email for information from our office. If you are not receiving emails, please contact the Prep Office so that we can update our records.
- Help your child be conscientious of assignments given to them.
- Have your child come prepared for class with their PREP bag containing their textbook, pencil case and folder. Join your child in participating in activities offered in his/her grade.
- We welcome parents to join us as special guests in the classroom during the year.
- Check weekly Church Bulletin and the PREP website for important information regarding the Prep program.
- Attend opening session and all required meetings.

FAMILY CATECHESIS REPONSIBILITIES/PARTICIPATION

- Parents commit to attending each of the 5 meetings with the DRE. There **MUST** be one parent or guardian present at all meetings. Students will be placed in a traditional Prep class if all requirements are not met.
- Teach your child to pray in their own words as well as to learn the prayers required at their level (as well as review previous learned prayers).

- Parents will teach each lesson at home and have their child/ren do all chapter quizzes and email them to the DRE in a timely manner. Children do not need to come in for an exam. The chapter quizzes will be their form of assessment. Each unit needs to be completed before the next parent meeting.
- Parents commit to engaging in each of the parent meetings by participating in discussions.
- Children in Level 2 or 6 must attend additional in-person classes to help prepare for their sacraments.
- Parents commit to bringing their children to Mass regularly.
- **Families must attend the two family faith formation events and the two Take your Parents to PREP days as well as one Parish Lenten event.**

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Our catechists have spent time preparing their classrooms, their lessons, and their hearts. To demonstrate support of these dedicated members of our parish, we ask students to observe the following:

- Participate regularly in Sunday Mass with their families
- Cooperate with the catechist to maintain a Christian atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Participate fully and appropriately in your group's activities.
- Treat others, and the property of others with respect.
- Please note, the following is unacceptable behavior:
 - 1.) Disrespect for any adult by word or action
 - 2.) Leaving the premises without permission from the office.
 - 3.) Excessive talking or calling out in class.
 - 4.) Fighting
 - 5.) Defacing books, desks, walls, bathroom, etc.
 - 6.) Removing or touching items from day student's desk
 - 7.) Repeated failure to complete homework assignments.
- Children in Whole Family Catechesis Model will cooperate with their parent/guardian in completing assignments at home, turning in quizzes, and learning their prayers.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR IN-PERSON PREP CLASSES

1. **ARRIVAL** -- Students are asked to arrive 10 minutes prior to the program's scheduled starting time to avoid lateness. They are to report directly to the classroom. All parents are to park and walk their child into the building, using the main doors. Parents with children in first through 3rd grade must walk their child to the classroom. Children in fourth through sixth grade can walk themselves to the classroom. Again, please enter through **main doors** only. No student is to enter the room if the catechist or assistant is not here. Parents, please exit out the center doors or doors down by the Church, NOT the main doors.
2. No student is permitted to leave the school building or program site prior to the appointed time without the expressed permission of the program director and prior **verbal and written** notification from a parent. If for some reason a child needs to be excused early from class, please send in a written note with your child to be given to their catechist at the beginning of class with the reason for dismissal. The parent must come to the main doors to sign out and pick up their child. Again, for safety reasons, no child may leave the building alone.
3. **DISMISSAL – SUNDAY AND TUESDAY--ALL** parents must park in the parking lot and walk in to retrieve their children, using the MAIN doors to the lobby. For classes on the first floor, walk down the hallway and pick up your child/ren from the classroom. Children upstairs will come down to the lobby at dismissal. You may then exit out the center doors or the doors down by Church, NOT the main doors. Please notify the DRE/catechist if anyone other than the child's parent or guardian will be picking up their child.
4. The catechist will be informed by the program director as to whether a student is to be released into the custody of a non-custodial parent.
5. **REGISTRATION**—PREP families must be registered parishioners of St. Alphonsus Church. PREP registration is on-line through Parish Giving and begins in the Spring. Registrations received after July 6th will incur a \$25.00 late fee. Baptismal certificates must be uploaded or given to the Prep office at or soon after the time of registration for new students not baptized at St. Alphonsus Church. Tuition must accompany the registration. When moving, please notify the PREP office of the last day your child will attend. A financial concern should not prevent

you from registering your child(ren) in our program. Payment plans are available. Prep catechists receive free tuition and full-time assistants receive a reduced rate.

6. **TUITION AND SACRAMENTAL FEES**—tuition fee is \$190 for one child, \$345 for two children, \$450 for three or more children. Sacramental fee for Level 2 is \$75, Sacramental Fee for Level 6 is \$85. If you register after July 1, you will incur a \$25.00 late fee. Shining Stars Program for 3 -5 year olds is \$30.
7. **ATTENDANCE**—A minimum of 35 hours of religious instruction are required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Office of Catechetical Formation. It is also recommended that a child repeat the grade if frequent absences occur (10-15%). Our attendance policy therefore is:
 - When a child misses a class, the parent should supervise the completion of the missed lesson, the chapter being covered is listed on the grade level calendar. The child should read the chapter and complete all written activities in the chapter. This needs to be shown to the catechist the following week. **Please email the catechist and DRE to let them know your child will be absent.**
 - If a long-term absence occurs due to illness or a family situation, parents must contact the Director of Religious Education to arrange a suitable way for their child to complete all their assigned work and examinations before they are promoted to the next grade level.
 - Since the curriculum is graded and presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip grades. If children register with no previous religious instruction, they may or may not be placed in the same grade level they are in school. This matter must be discussed with the administration.
 - *If a student missed 5 sessions, they will not be promoted to the next grade level until their parents resolve this issue with the Director of Religious Education.*
8. **ASSESSMENTS**—Assessments are given in class as a review in Levels 1 through 6 based on the material outlined on the grade level calendar. Additional material to study will be provided by the catechist. All students must successfully complete their assessments in order to be promoted.
9. **CELL PHONE POLICY**—cell phone use is prohibited during the Prep session. If you have one, please turn it off and leave it in your bag. Cell phones found in use will be brought to the Prep Office and must be picked up by a parent.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY—Occasionally there may be situations where

disciplinary actions must be taken, such as disruptive or inappropriate behavior in class. First, the catechist will discuss the situation and possible solutions with the Director of Religious Education. If the problem persists, parents will be called. If the problem continues, the DRE will meet with parents, the student, and the catechist, to best resolve the situation.

- 10. SNACK FREE ZONE**—All Prep classes are snack free. NO snacks are permitted in the classroom. Please make sure your child has eaten before they enter the school. Water bottles are permitted.

SACRAMENT REQUIREMENTS

Sacraments can be received only when the following criteria are met:

1. The student has had 2 consecutive years of religious instruction prior to receiving the Sacrament.
 2. The family is registered in the parish
 3. The family participates with their children in Sunday Mass
 4. Have an appreciation and understanding of the sacrament appropriate for the age level.
- For students preparing to receive Sacraments (Reconciliation, Holy Communion, & Confirmation) - attendance at **ALL SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION ACTIVITIES** (meetings, retreats, service projects, practices, etc.) is **MANDATORY**.

Parents of students in Grade 3 and above who have not received the Sacraments of Reconciliation and/or Eucharist should contact the Director for support in preparing their children for these sacraments.

COMMUNICATION

In addition to the handbook, you have received the yearly calendar. This information will be posted on the parish website. **Please prioritize your commitment to the religious education of your child(ren) by putting the dates that concern your child and family on your calendars at home.**

Your children will be carrying their PREP folders to and from class. Please check them on a regular basis for important information.

The Director of Religious Education and your catechist will be sending periodic informative emails.

SAFETY PRODIGAL AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The St. Alphonsus Director or Religious Education, Catechists and Volunteers prioritize the safety and well-being of all children present in the building during all Prep Sessions and events and procedures have been implemented to provide safety in the event of a fire or internal or external threat. Appropriate drills will be implemented.

We ask parents/guardians to agree to the following terms and conditions and that they will abide by them regarding the safety and precautions necessary for PREP (whether you are in-class each week, or in the home model, but on occasion will attend classes or events in person).

- Parents will abide by the drop-off and dismissal instructions as stated in the handbook.
- Students will use a school bag (or something similar) for materials which travel to and from the home. The bag must be clearly identified with their name.
- A student may not attend PREP or a PREP event if he/she is running a temperature over 100 degrees, experiencing symptoms of chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

SNOW EMERGENCY

Should weather force a last minute decision, an email will be sent out and an announcement posted on the St. Alphonsus website. Closings will also be announced on KYW 1060, with the PREP broadcast number 1151.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Parish Website: www.stalphonsusparish.org