

# *St. Alphonsus Religious Education*



*Handbook 2011-2012*

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# Personnel

## Pastor

[Fr. James Hurlbert](#)

## Associate Pastor

[Fr. Shawn Gould](#)

## Director

[Catherine Crino](#) - 773-525-0709, ext. 111

(On sabbatical October 1 to December 31, 2011.)

## Administrative Associate

[Jenna Patitucci](#) - 773-525-0709, est. 107

## Catechists

<i>Kindergarten</i>	Colleen Burnette Maria Castro
<i>First Year</i>	Martha Herrera Clarivel Corral Renee Thomas Amy Calendo
<i>Second Grade</i>	Catherine Keller Laura Ledesma Bridget Hogan
<i>Third Grade</i>	Pamela Carrico Beth Corrigan
<i>Fourth Grade</i>	JoAnn Fifeld Gloria Sanchez
<i>Fifth Grade</i>	Alison Hendricks Lisa Bucchi
<i>Confirmation I</i>	Jim Shales Katie Scully
<i>Confirmation II</i>	Ben Hilby
<i>Confirmation III</i>	Liza Reed Art Hanley

# Philosophy

**Parents are the first educators of their children in the faith.** They remain the most important ones, no matter how long a child goes to school.

Pope John Paul II repeatedly wrote about the importance of the family in religious education. In 1979 (*Catechesis in Our Time*), he said,

*The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.... Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel.*

*...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.*

***Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.***(§ 68)

**Parents and the parish function as partners in this enterprise.** With communication and cooperation, we create an environment in which children can grow in their faith. As participants in the religious education program, **parents make a commitment to the religious formation of their children at home**, which includes

- learning prayer and Catholic practices;
- exploring the Scriptures together;
- and sharing values and morals.

Parents also commit to making sure that their children attend the sessions and make up any work that is missed.

**An essential part of this commitment is for families to worship with their children and the whole parish at mass on Sunday and to help prepare their children for the sacraments.**

The role of the parish is to support parents in their role, but not to take it over. A primary goal of our catechetical program is to help parents bring home what their children are learning here and make it a part of family life.

In order to meet these goals, the parish community assists and supports the family by providing a welcoming environment where families can worship together. The parish also provides a religious education program which gives the students an experience of community learning with their age group, but does not replace the parents.

The parish financially supports the religious education program . It recruits and trains qualified catechists, assures that there is a sound curriculum and the necessary materials available to implement it.

# Curriculum

Each grade level includes learning about church teaching, Scripture, the church's liturgy and prayer, feasts and seasons, Mary and the saints, and Christian morality. In addition, each level concentrates on specific topics and themes.

The curriculum is structured so that each year provides a foundation for the next year. Students who skip years are missing valuable background.

The entire program - classroom work, other activities, Scripture and liturgy, and family discussions - works together to give children a well-rounded foundation for their adult faith.

The goals for each level are outlined below. [The full curriculum is available here.](#)

***We will test students in grades 1 through 8 on basic religious literacy. While we will teach these concepts and prayers in class, it is the responsibility of families to see that students master the basic literacy foundation.***

***In order to help families, each student will be given a booklet entitled [Prayers, Practices and Religious Literacy Objectives](#) so that they can work with their children at home.***

***For students who miss enrolling for specific years, the benchmarks will be tested in January of each year. It is the responsibility of the family to help the student meet those benchmarks.***

The textbook series in grades one through six is Sadlier's *We Believe*. In Junior High, there are individual texts to accompany each module, from Sadlier. In middle school we also use the *Breakthrough Bible* and *Catholic Connections Handbook* from St. Mary's Press. There are also supplemental materials for each grade.

*Kindergarten*      The goals of the Kindergarten program are to help young children discover their membership in a larger family, the church. They are introduced to the stories of our tradition in the Bible, the family of the saints and basic prayers. Families are asked to read with their children at home to help reinforce the concepts presented in class.

*First Year*            The goals of the First Year curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on 1) helping them to begin to understand their creation by a loving God; 2) helping them to learn the formal prayers of the church and to begin a life of prayer; 3) helping them to understand their membership in the church.

*Second Grade*      The goals of the Second Grade curriculum focus on preparing the students for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the course of this preparation, they concentrate upon 1) the life and person of Jesus; 2) how the church celebrates the sacraments in its liturgy; 3) how they can draw closer to God in prayer and in the sacraments.

There is also a book which will be used especially to prepare for First Communion.

*Third Grade*        The Third Grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the church. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore 1) how the church functions; 2) what the church believes in the Creed; 3) how the church depends upon Scripture.

- Fourth Grade* The focus of the fourth grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will 1) learn how our moral tradition is rooted in the Old and New Testaments; 2) what the church teaches about how we should live our lives; 3) explore ways that they can “do good and avoid evil” in their everyday lives.
- Fifth Grade* The fifth grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will 1) learn about each of the sacraments in more depth; 2) have a working familiarity with the liturgy and the liturgical year; 3) explore the life and message of St. Paul.
- Confirmation I* ***This is the first of three required years leading to Confirmation. Students beginning later than sixth grade, begin with this course.*** The Confirmation I curriculum focuses on the Old Testament. Students will 1) develop a working knowledge of the major themes of the Old Testament; 2) explore more about Judaism and the world of the Scriptures; 3) be able to describe the links between the Old Testament and the Christian tradition.
- Confirmation II* Confirmation II consists of two modules: Christian morality and Jesus and discipleship. The first module will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and give the students information about the Church’s guidance in moral decision-making. The second module will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the gospels, and also pose the challenge of discipleship to the students. Is following Jesus, and letting that govern the choices in their lives, a decision that they are ready to make?
- Confirmation III* Confirmation III consists of three modules: Creed, a review of Catholic teaching and immediate preparation for confirmation. The review of the Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the sacrament of confirmation. The second half of the year on a review of all aspects of living and praying as a Catholic Christian, as well as immediate preparation for Confirmation.

# *Class Schedule for 2011-2012*

All class sessions will be held on Tuesday evenings at 6:15 PM until 7:30 PM for grades K - Confirmation III. [See the calendar for specific class days.](#)

## *Reinforcement at Home*

The total class time that students experience during the year is just thirty hours. In addition, there is at least a week between classes. For these reasons, reinforcement at home is essential for the entire program to work.

Each student will have take-home work each session. The cooperation of parents in making sure that work is completed and returned is essential.

Sometimes homework will consist of activities or memorization of prayers, etc.

Students are expected to make up work when they are absent.

***If students miss a grade, or if they do not know material necessary to be successful at the next level, it is the responsibility of the family to make sure that the work is made up and the material is mastered.***

## *Attendance Policy*

Students are expected to be ready to begin class at 6:15 PM. Students who are late must come to the office for a tardy admittance slip. This is so we have a record of who is in the building.

Students are expected to attend class every session. If illness interferes, the catechist will send work home so that it can be made up.

Because of the limited number of sessions, every session is important. While we understand the family events will mean an occasional missed session, these should be kept to a minimum.

If you know that your child will be absent, please call to let us know.

We consider 3 absences to be excessive. Make-up lessons can be obtained from the catechist. Helping the child to complete it is the responsibility of the parents.

For purposes of preparation for sacraments, more than three absences will mean that the student may need to attend make up sessions.

Sports activities are not considered legitimate excuses for an absence or early dismissal. We are more than willing to work with coaches to insure that attendance in class does not impede a child's participation on the team. (In short, it makes more sense for a student to miss the first quarter of a game rather than half of a limited class session.)

# *Safety and Discipline Policy*

All the catechists and other volunteers and employees who have contact with children have undergone a security and background check. In addition, each one has participated in *Virtus* training, an initiative of the Archdiocese which is in compliance with "Protecting God's Children." *Virtus* educates those who work with children about preventing child abuse. They have also all completed training at Mandated Reporters with the Department of Child and Family Services.

Students shall contribute to the learning experience by cooperating with the classroom rules, as explained by the catechist. These rules are:

- Respect yourself, others, and things.
- Contribute to the learning environment.
- Follow program and classroom procedures.

If the child is regularly disruptive, parents will be notified.

Children are not allowed free access to the building unsupervised by adults. This policy is for your child's safety and building security.

As students arrive for class, they should gather in the main hall of the school. Their catechist will meet them and they will go as a group to the classroom.

Late arriving students must report for a tardy slip before going to their classes.

## *Communicating with Families*

There is a weekly email newsletter sent to all families on Tuesday afternoons. Please make sure that we have your current email address. We can send to multiple addresses, so supply us with any that you wish.

The newsletter includes information about the program, upcoming events, news from the parish, along with other information which may be of interest.

The [St. Alphonsus Religious Education Facebook page](#) is updated with all newsletters, sacrament information, emergency closings, and other news. You don't need a Facebook account to access it. You can also access it from the St. Alphonsus parish web site.

Each Religious Education family also receives the [monthly parish e-news](#). Sacrament program information comes via email as well.

**If you unsubscribe to one email list, you will unsubscribe to them all! Please do not unsubscribe if you wish to receive information about the programs.** If you have already unsubscribed, you can re-subscribe via the email sign up on the [parish web site](#). Please also contact [Jenna Patitucci](#).

# *Report Cards, Records and Parent Visits*

Progress reports are issued twice a year, so that parents can keep track of their child's work in the classroom.

## **About access to records:**

Custodial parents can request the student's record by notifying the Director by phone or in writing. Please give us one week's notice.

We respect the rights of non-custodial parents with regard to religious education records and program related information. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the program administrator will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the religious education records and other religious education program-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the program administrator with an certified copy of the court order.

## **About access to children:**

We presume that both parents of a child have equal access to the child, even if the parents are divorced or separated. Thus, unless informed otherwise in writing and with adequate evidence that a parent is not permitted to have unqualified access to the child, the religious education program will permit either parent to have access to a child while at St. Alphonsus and will release the child to either parent.

## **About parent visits:**

Parent visits to class are welcome. Please let both the office and the catechist know in advance when you are planning to visit.

# *Sacrament Program and Policies*

Students must have completed one full year of Catholic religious education (here at St. Alphonsus or elsewhere) immediately prior to beginning preparation for a sacrament.

**In order to have complete records, we must have a copy of your child's baptismal certificate on file, if s/he has been baptized.**

## **Baptism**

Children who are old enough for school and who have not been baptized are invited to join the catechumenate for children. They are prepared for baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. They celebrate these sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

Children and their families meet in sessions throughout the year, leading up to Easter. For more information, contact the director.

## **First Eucharist and First Penance/Reconciliation**

The students in the second grade (who have completed the first year program) are prepared for the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist as part of their class sessions.

These class sessions are in conjunction with the formation which they receive with their families. The most important preparation children can receive for the Eucharist is to be regular participants at Sunday mass.

Many students take part in the program in the second grade. However, students of all ages can be part of the process, with older students working in their own groups.

These special sacrament classes for students who are not in second grade meet on another night in addition to Tuesday.

## **Confirmation**

Confirmation is celebrated in the spring. Most students will be confirmed in eighth grade, if they have completed the three year confirmation preparation sequence. Students who begin in grades seven and eight will begin with Confirmation I and complete all three years of the sequence. Students who choose not to be confirmed in junior high can prepare to celebrate the sacrament in high school.

Confirmation I	Introduction to the Old Testament
Confirmation II	Discipleship and Morality; Jesus and the Gospels
Confirmation III	Review of Creed and sacraments, Acts of the Apostles, Confirmation

In addition to classroom work, students are expected to participate in the parish Confirmation program, which consists of an annual prayer day (retreat), service, and off-site activities in each year.

Students must have completed one full year of religious education before beginning the confirmation program. In addition, they need to show mastery of the basic religious literacy objectives for each of the grades preceding junior high. (The test for those benchmarks will be in January of each year.)

### **Requirements for celebrating the sacraments at St. Alphonsus:**

- Minimum attendance standards at the regular Tuesday night classes, including one year of prior preparation before beginning the sacrament prep program.
- Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist, either here or at another Catholic church. Families and children are responsible for demonstrating regular attendance by having giving staff members attendance cards (or bulletins) from another parish.
- Participation in additional preparation sessions (either for Baptism, for First Eucharist/Reconciliation or Confirmation prayer days and retreats.)
- Satisfactory completion of service requirements for confirmation preparation.

### **Fees for the Sacrament Preparation Programs**

The fees for the preparation programs cover only a portion of the parish's costs. The fees partially cover the texts, the retreat, family activities, and the costs associated with the celebrations themselves (flowers, music, programs, etc.)

The fees are

- \$ 50.00**      First Eucharist and Penance (Reconciliation)
- \$150.00**      Confirmation. (This fee covers all three years of preparation.)

# Participation in Liturgy and Prayer

## **SUNDAY WORSHIP**

Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist is both a privilege and responsibility for Christians. Families are strongly encouraged to come and worship with their children every Sunday.

On Sundays there are two programs aimed at making family participation in the liturgy appealing for all age groups: [Children's Liturgy of the Word and Iglesia Infantil](#). These programs at the 10:30 (English) and 12:15 (Spanish) masses are a way for children to explore the Scripture readings at their own level. They return to their families for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

## **PRAYER SERVICES**

There are prayer services planned about once a month to begin the sessions. These sessions take place in the Chapel of the Word or in the church. They help the students to focus on a feast or season.

Included in these services will be one mass celebrated on Tuesday evening, the Stations of the Cross during Lent and a May Crowning to end our year together. In addition, students have the opportunity to go to confession during Lent.

Parents are very welcome to attend these services.

## **PRAYER AT HOME AND LEARNING PRAYER**

Like anything else, prayer cannot be learned or become a habit if it is not regularly practiced. The religious education program can provide a framework to introduce prayers and to integrate them with what the children are learning. The [Prayers and Practices Book](#) contains all of these prayers so that you can pray them at home.

**The only way that children can actually learn the prayers is to pray them at home on a daily basis.**

As a rule of thumb, this is what your child should know and by what grade:

- During first grade, children should master the Sign of the Cross and be able to recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be. They may also learn the prayer to their guardian angel.
- During second grade, children should be able to recite an Act of Contrition and know a thanksgiving prayer to say following communion. They should also know the basic responses for the mass.
- During third grade, children should have a basic familiarity with the rosary and learn the Hail Holy Queen. They are also responsible for knowing the Apostles' Creed.
- During fourth and fifth grades, students can add other memorized prayers to their "repertoire" and be able to pray on their own. An example of another prayer would be the Prayer of St. Francis.

By the end of fifth grade, students should also know the *Confiteor*, *Gloria* from the mass and the Nicene Creed.

- Sixth graders can memorize the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*.
- Confirmation students should know the prayer, *Come Holy Spirit*.

# *Registration and Tuition*

All families in the program are expected to be registered members of St. Alphonsus parish. Out of parish families may register and pay a supplemental fee.

Students are expected to be registered in the program each year that they are in school. The program is developmental and covers a different area of the curriculum each year. Children who skip years are missing important background and will be at a disadvantage when they rejoin the program.

Tuition rates for are:

**\$175.00 for one child**

**\$275.00 for two children**

**\$350.00 for families with three or more children.**

Tuition and fees pay only a portion of the cost of your child's religious education. The parish community subsidizes the rest. Tuition is used for salaries, texts and other materials, supplies for art projects and other activities, resources for the classroom, including audio-visual materials.

Tuition and fees can be paid  
in full at the time of registration or  
paid in two installments - fall and winter.

Please let us know your preference.

*Genuine financial need is no barrier to registering your child. We are glad to work out an arrangement for your family. We do ask families who apply for scholarship consideration to be registered members of the parish and regular in their mass attendance.*

## **Non-discrimination policy:**

No child will be denied the right to participate in religious education classes due to race, color, national origin, or ability to pay.

## **Special education:**

Students in need of special education have a right to catechesis and participation in the sacramental life of the church. We will accommodate any such students to the best of our ability. We will also assist parents in finding other resources that will meet their child's needs.

If your child has special needs which are addressed in school, please meet with us and let us know of procedures and strategies used in those classes. Maintaining a consistent approach is very helpful both for the student and for the catechist.

# *Emergencies and Closing Information*

Emergency information is required at the time of registration. We need to keep the following on file:

The name and telephone of your doctor.

The name and telephone of a relative or friend to contact in case you are not available.

Any information about medication or physical conditions that we should know.

Catechists cannot give medication to children. If your child needs medication during class time, please stop in the office before delivering the medicine.

## ***EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION***

During severe cold or on snowy days, please listen to one of the following stations for closing information:

Radio: AM

780 WBBM

FM

96 WBBM-FM

102 WCLR

103.5 WFYR

Television: Channels 9 and 32

You can also go to [www.emergencyclosingcenter.com](http://www.emergencyclosingcenter.com) or the [St. Alphonsus Religious Education Facebook page](#). We will also try to send an email blast to all families.