

Saint Alphonsus

# Religious Education Parent Handbook

2022-2023



# Welcome Letter

Dear Religious Education Families,

Welcome to the St. Alphonsus Religious Education program for the 2022-2023 school year! Your decision to give your child the opportunity to dive further into their faith is a great gift. We are excited to work with you and your children throughout the year.

As parents, you are your child's first and primary teacher of the faith. It is our responsibility in the church and the office of religious education to assist you in that catechesis. Our greatest successes will happen working together, with your involvement. We expect that you take your child to mass every Sunday and pray with them daily at home.

This year our program is blessed to have many wonderful and talented catechists who love the Catholic faith and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We look forward to creating disciples of Christ who will share God's gifts with the world.

We strongly encourage all families to take advantage of the ministries and events that our parish organizes. There are many avenues for you to get involved!

We cannot run our programs without volunteers. Therefore, we always ask all families to consider volunteering in one way or another. In our religious education program, we are in need of catechists, substitute catechists, and teaching assistants. By getting involved with the ministries of the church you set a strong example for our children about what it means to be a part of the body of Christ.

Thank you for setting a foundation of faith in your child and for allowing us to work alongside you in teaching, sharing, and practicing the Catholic faith. I look forward to getting to know each of you in the year ahead!

Many blessings,

Erica Cook

Coordinator of Religious Education

Saint Alphonsus Parish

[ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church](mailto:ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church) *(new email!)*

773-525-0709 x2119

## Our Mission

The Saint Alphonsus Religious Education Program is dedicated to inspire our parish children to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Author of Life and Architect of Love. We help that relationship flourish by reaching children first to eighth grade by proclaiming the message of Christ through classroom education, prayer, worship, service opportunities, and the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. Beginning in the baptism liturgy, parents are instructed by the Church that they are the first and primary educators of the faith for their children. We are dedicated to working in **partnership** with parents. In doing so, we hope to fashion disciples of Christ who will glorify the Lord by their lives.

## Office Hours and Location

Saint Alphonsus Parish  
1429 W Wellington Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60657

773-525-0709 x2119

[ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church](mailto:ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church) (*new email!*)

### Academic Year

Tuesdays 12:00pm - 6:00pm

Wednesdays and Thursdays 9:00am-2:30pm.

Appointments can be made outside of office hours

## Class Times and Classroom Policies

**Grades 1-8**

**Tuesdays**

**6:15pm-7:30pm**

**Attendance:** Students should not miss more than 20% of classes (5 classes) per year unless under extreme circumstances. Missing classes may result in the student needing to do work at home, attend make-up classes or repeat that year of Religious Education. Missing more than 25% of classes (6 classes) will result in a repeat of that year.

**Classroom conduct:** All students will treat the teacher, other students, and classroom with respect. Failure to do so may result in the child being sent home, attending class with a parent or guardian present, or asked to leave the religious education program.

**Food:** Outside food may not be brought in or consumed in the classrooms without prior discussion with the Coordinator of Religious Education.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones may not be used during class time. All cell phones will be placed in a central location at the beginning of class and on silent, so everyone is aware of their shared responsibility to remain off their phones during class time. The teacher reserves the right to take the phone away if it is being disruptive and have it picked up by the parent at the end of the class.

**Full Engagement:** Students will fully engage in the class and will bring completed homework (when assigned) to the next class. If applicable, students will bring their class books with them to all classes. If a child loses their book a replacement fee of \$25 is required.

## Sacramental Preparation

The Archdiocese has a standard two year preparation program for reception of any sacrament. All children wishing to receive a sacrament must have a **full year of religious education classes prior** to the sacramental year itself. We also ask that all students meet the minimum attendance requirements. We want to make sure students are well formed and well prepared for the reception of their sacraments. If you are interested in preparing your child to receive a sacrament your child must be baptized and enrolled in either the Religious Education Program or our school, Alphonsus Academy and Center for the Arts.

## Religious Education Expectations of the Family

1. As we learn in the baptism liturgy, parents are the primary religious educators of their children. No religious education program will be able to instill values, tell stories of faith, and witness to God's love and companionship if it is absent in the home. Parents are seen as the image and likeness of God in the eyes of their children! Children form their first conception of God and His relationship with them from their parents, so it's vital that parents talk about Jesus and pray with their children each day.
2. Families are expected to attend Sunday Liturgies with their children on a consistent basis. Attending Mass as a family is a wonderful opportunity for you to introduce your child to the Body of Christ and to explain to your child the importance of worshipping with the larger faith community. *Your child's faith is greatly influenced by how you practice your own!*
3. Parents are asked to read all information sent home with their child and through email. Through email you will be informed about up-coming events in the parish, religious opportunities, family masses, and parent meetings.
4. Engage with events and ministries through the parish.

## Policies and Information

### Enrollment

Enrollment in the Religious Education Program is open to any child whose family is a registered member of Saint Alphonsus. Non-parishioners can enroll pending classroom availability and with an additional fee. The Religious Education Program enrolls students from 1st - 8th grade. The grade level of a child entering the program is determined by the Coordinator of Religious Education in communication with the parents, based upon their prior religious education experience and age.

## Tuition

Tuition is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. We try to keep our tuition fees as reasonable as possible. The parish subsidizes a large portion of Religious Education. Additional fees of \$50 are assessed for late registrations and non-parishoners. Sacramental fees are also assessed to cover the cost of retreats, materials and liturgy. Any outstanding fees may preclude the student from being able to register in a subsequent year. However, no child will be turned away from Religious Education due to the lack of the ability to pay tuition. If you are in need of financial assistance for tuition, please reach out to the Coordinator of religious education to create a payment plan or file for financial aid.

### 2022-2023 FEES:

Fees for 1 child	\$ 250.00
For 2 children	\$ 350.00
3 or more	\$ 450.00

### SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FEES (per child):

First Communion	\$ 75.00
Confirmation A (7th)	\$ 50.00
Confirmation B (8th)	\$ 75.00

LATE FEE applies after **September 10th** \$ 50.00

NON-PARISHIONER FEE \$ 50.00

## Class Size

Our goal is to have a class size of 15 students, maximum, per teacher. In order for us to maintain this goal, we would like to invite parents who are willing to consider becoming a catechist, classroom aide or a substitute. If you would like to become a catechist to help us keep class sizes small please call or email the religious education office.

## Absences

In the event that your child is going to be absent, *we ask that you email the religious education office and leave the child's name, catechist name and reason for absence*; any child who is absent for a session during sacramental years (2nd, 7th, and 8th grades) may need to make arrangements with the director and/or catechist to complete the missed work and return it the next session.

## Arrival and Dismissal

All students should enter through the 1439 West Wellington Avenue entrance and meet their catechists in the hallway on the first floor. In order to keep our children safe, we have developed a dismissal policy. Students 1st-4th grade must be picked up & dismissed by a parent or guardian **within** the school building. Students 5th-8th grade are dismissed from

the first floor of the school building to meet their transportation in the parking lot or walk home. If a parent would like their 5th-8th grade child dismissed supervised, they must indicate so upon registration.

Classes begin at 6:15pm on Tuesdays. Any child who is perpetually late will be asked to come in with their parents and meet with the Coordinator of Religious Education to work out a solution.

### **Late Pickup**

It is expected that all students are picked up promptly when classes are finished. If you are late picking up your child please notify via email immediately at: [ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church](mailto:ecook@stalphonsuschicago.church). Do not call the office of religious education.

If you are continuously late picking up your child a meeting with the Coordinator of Religious Education will be required to work out a solution.

### **Custody Issues**

The religious education program presumes that in the case of divorce or separation, both parents have equal access to their children unless one parent can provide evidence that he or she has the sole right.

### **Skipping Class Years**

Taking “breaks” from religious education classes are not permitted. Each year builds upon the previous one. If there is a prolonged gap between religious education years, an at home summer preparation may be required before the student can enter the appropriate grade.

# CODE OF BEHAVIOR

We expect students and adults to behave in a Christian manner rooted in respect.

- Respect to classmates, children and adults is expected. We do not allow inappropriate words, actions, and intents. This includes, but is not restricted to, foul language, bullying, harassment, fighting, threats, disobedience of instructions, violent language or disruptive behavior.
- Unless the coordinator approves, no one should bring food or beverages into the classroom.
- A student will respect the school and parish property, and not vandalize or destroy any aspect of the property.
- A student will not bring drugs, alcohol, or weapons on the premises. Violations will result with appropriate legal action.
- No unauthorized use of entertainment, electronic or phone devices is allowed during religious instruction. Electronic devices may be placed in a central location in the room.

When there is a violation with this code of behavior, the following four-step discipline procedure is enforced:

1. A verbal warning by the catechist
2. A discussion with the catechist after class
3. A discussion with the director
4. A conference with the parent/guardian

If there is any destruction of property, the offending child(ren)'s family will be responsible for restitution.

# PROCEDURES

## COVID Guidelines

Our program will follow the guidelines set forth by the Archdiocese & the Office of Catholic Schools. At this time (*Sep 2022*), masks are optional for individuals. We also ask that you keep your child home if they are ill.

## Emergency Preparations

Procedures for various emergency drills are established in accordance with Alphonsus Academy & Center for the Arts. Students will practice a fire drill each year.

## Emergency Closing and Class Cancellations

The Office of Religious Education will try to cancel classes up to 24 hours in advance. In the case of a class cancellation or emergency closing parents will be emailed **via constant contact**. Please use your own judgment if you feel driving conditions are unsafe.

## Publicity

Photos taken are for the sole purpose of promoting St. Alphonsus Religious Education and its events. Photography consents are provided in registration forms at the start of the school year.

## Health Concerns and Medication

You have the opportunity to alert us of health concerns during registration. Know that:

1. No catechist can administer medication.
2. Unless given permission by the coordinator, students cannot take any medication (including aspirin) into the classroom.
3. Request a meeting with the coordinator to discuss medication or other health concerns.

## Special Needs

In accordance with canon law, every child can participate in religious education. If there is sufficient collaboration with the parent/guardian, and the consent of the catechist, special needs students may participate in Religious Education classes. Assessment will assure the positive experience of all involved. If necessary, alternatives to whole class instruction are considered. SPRED programming is also available to students.

## Volunteer Training

In accordance with diocesan policy, adults ministering to minors, including parish leadership, are “mandated”, by state law, to report evidence of reasonable suspicion of



abuse and/or neglect of a minor to the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services. All volunteers shall be required annually to sign the state form acknowledging they are aware of their status as mandated reporters.

### **Communication**

Please contact the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education with any issues or concerns. You can reach the coordinator via the following media:

[ecook@stalphonsuschicago.edu](mailto:ecook@stalphonsuschicago.edu)

773-525-3238 ext. 2119

## Important Dates for Sacramental Preparation

Saint Alphonsus Parish RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 2022-2023 First Communion Preparation Calendar		
Sacraments of First Reconciliation & First Communion		
Saturday January 28	1:00 pm (RE)	First Reconciliation
Saturday April 15, 2023 or April 22, 2023	9:30am - 11:30am	First Communion Retreat
Thursday May 4	5:30pm (RE) 6:30pm (AACCA)	First Communion Rehearsal <i>*TBD</i>
Saturday May 6	1:00pm (RE)	Sacrament of First Communion
Sunday May 7	2:00pm (AACCA)	Sacrament of First Communion

Saint Alphonsus Parish RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 2022-2023 Confirmation Preparation Projects		
Sacrament of Confirmation - Confirmation Year B (2023)		
Tuesday, Oct 18	6:30 PM	Confirmation Parent Meeting
Tuesday, Nov 29		Saint Report Due
Tuesday, Nov 29		Sponsor Selected
Tuesday, Mar 7		Service Project Due
Tuesday, Mar 7		Mass Journals Due (4)
Tuesday, Mar 21	6:15 PM	Confirmation Rehearsal with Sponsor or adult
Friday, Mar 24	6:00 PM	Candidates and sponsors arrive
	7:00 PM	Sacrament of Confirmation
	9:00 PM	Reception to follow in Festival Hall

*\*Dates and times may be subject to change!*