

St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish

Jesus...said to them, "Let the Children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say unto you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Matthew 19:14

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You will find general guidelines and helpful information in this handbook. Important dates for you to mark on your calendar may be found on the First Communion and First Reconciliation Calendar. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Religious Education should you have any questions or concerns.

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The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist

Sacraments are an outward sign of God's love.

What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing. It is also known as the sacrament of Penance. Confession is another way of referring to this sacrament.

Reconciliation is an element of salvation that refers to the results of atonement. It is the end of estrangement, caused by sin, between God and humanity. Through confessing our sins, asking for forgiveness, and atoning, healing occurs which allows us to be reconnected with Christ.

We are encouraged to celebrate the sacrament often. It is a sacrament of ongoing conversion, which strengthens us to forgive others and to live more like Christ.

What is Eucharist?

The Eucharist is one of three sacraments of initiation in the Church. The other two are Baptism and Confirmation. Eucharist is also called Holy Communion because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in His Body and Blood.

Eucharist is the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass. Eucharist refers to both the celebration of the Mass and the consecrated bread and wine, which through transubstantiation become the Body and Blood of Christ. Transubstantiation is the change of the substance of bread (the Host) and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Eucharist unites us with Christ and the Church. At the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples to “do this in memory of me.” The Eucharist is a memorial of the Last Supper. As a memorial, the Eucharist is more than a simple remembering of past events. It actually makes present the sacrifice of the cross that Christ offered for all people.

This sacrament helps us to recognize the face of Christ in those in need and makes us one in Christ. Our communion with Christ unites us with the Church across time and space and into eternity.

The Role of Parents

As your child’s first and primary teacher of faith, you give witness daily to your faith as you demonstrate your convictions about life and living. It is very important that you show your child that receiving Communion, celebrating the Mass and Reconciliation are part of your daily life and not merely part of a celebratory day.

We are here to support your family by providing information and guidance so you have the confidence you need in your role.

Readiness Standards for Reconciliation

- Ability to reflect on his/her attitudes and actions
- Ability to make appropriate choices
- Ability to understand the effect of his/her actions on others
- Ability to know the difference between right and wrong
- Ability to take pride in or regret his/her actions
- Ability to distinguish between "wrong" and "sin"
- Ability to make amends
- Ability to understand church affiliation
- Ability to relate to Jesus as one who forgives
- Ability to pray and worship
- Ability to understand the sacramental rites

Readiness Standards for Holy Eucharist

- Willingness to receive the sacrament
- Ability to attentively participate in the liturgy
- Ability to understand church affiliation
- Ability to relate to Jesus as one who loves and cares for each person
- Ability to distinguish between ordinary bread and the Eucharist
- Regular attendance at Mass
- Ability to participate in the Mass

General Guidelines

Attendance (Religious Education students only)

Regular attendance is essential for the continuity and reinforcement of Catholic teaching and spiritual formation. This includes arriving on time. Classes are held from 9:35-10:50 am on Sundays or from 6:00-7:15 pm on Mondays. **Any child with more than 3 absences will not be able to make his/her First Communion this school year** unless the absences are made up.

If a student is unable to attend a class session, a parent/guardian must call the Faith Formation Office (847)255 9490 ext. 104 or email s.panek@saintalphonsus.com prior to the start of class. Please include the child's full name, grade, and reason for the absence.

If your family is faced with a crisis or unusual circumstance, please contact the office. We will be most willing to work with your family.

Banner

We are asking each child and her/his family to make a First Eucharist Banner, which will be displayed in the church for the First Eucharist Mass. The banner kit will be sent home with your child in March, when your child has his/her religion class. Everything needed to make the banner is included in the kit. The banners may be turned in to your child's teacher/catechist or directly to the Religious Education Office in April.

Baptismal Records

We must have a photocopy of your child's baptismal certificate on file if your child was **not** baptized at St. Alphonsus. Please note that your child will not be able to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation or First Eucharist if a copy of the baptismal certificate is not on file with the Religious Education Office.

If your child was baptized in a faith other than the Roman Catholic Church, your child's record will be reviewed to determine what steps, if any, need to be taken.

Certificate Corrections

We make every attempt to make sure that your child's information is correct. Parents are asked to carefully review the data recorded from the First Eucharist information sheet. We cannot correct the worship aid, but the certificates can be redone if needed. If any corrections are needed, please make the correction on the certificate and place it either in the basket on the table outside of the church proper after practice or drop it off in the Religious Education Office.

Dress Attire

Boys - Boys wear a white long sleeved dress shirt, tie, dark dress pants, a dark jacket or suit coat, and dress shoes. Gym shoes may not be worn. Boys may not carry anything in their hands during Mass.

Girls – Girls wear a white dress and white shoes. A veil, hair accessory, or fresh flower crown would be an appropriate headdress for First Communion. Girls may not wear gloves, flowers, purses or carry anything in their hands during the Mass.

Mass Etiquette

- **Reverence**

There needs to be a fundamental respect and understanding of the sacredness of the Mass. It is a time to gather together in God's presence, to be nourished in a special way by God. We listen to the Word of God (Bible), we pray together, and we share the ultimate food for the soul-the Body and Blood of Christ. The Mass is the greatest prayer of the Church. It unites us all and leads us to live as Jesus' disciples.

What does this mean for Catholics and guests? We ask that the presence and behavior of those present throughout the service not detract in any way from the reverence accorded to the Mass. It is important that those gathered remain prayerful and reverent during the entire Mass. Please turn off your cell phones prior to the start of the Mass.

- **Small Children**

Due to the length of the Mass, it may be difficult for some younger children to sit still. Please feel free to take your small child out of Mass and make use of the Narthex or Meeting Room A. The Narthex is wired for sound.

- **Electronic Devices**

Please leave all electronic games, iPods, etc. at home or in the car.

- **Food**

Please do not bring any food into church.

- **Prayer and Singing**

All who participate in the liturgy are encouraged to respond to the prayers and to sing. When we all pray and sing, we can truly feel the power of the liturgy embracing the assembly. We owe it to ourselves and to the others around us to participate as fully as we can to make the experience as rich as it can be. As St. Augustine said "Singing is like praying twice!" God simply asks that each of us use the voice He has given us.

- **Pictures**

You will receive an order form for a group photo of all the second graders who will be receiving the sacrament.