

SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT
212 Welsh Road
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

2024



Family Catechesis Program Handbook

Forming Disciples in Jesus Christ

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (Catechesi Tradendae #5).

**SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT
OFFICE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
FAMILY CATECHESIS HANDBOOK**

THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS CERTAIN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT CCD PROGRAM'S FAMILY CATECHESIS OPTION (HEREIN KNOWN AS THE PROGRAM). THE PROGRAM MAY CHANGE ANY OF ITS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NEEDED AND APPLY THEM AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

IN THE EVENT OF SUCH A CHANGE PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION AND PROVIDED WITH AN ADDENDUM IF NECESSARY.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR POLICY OR PROCEDURE PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

STUDENTS AND PARENTS MUST ACCEPT AND ABIDE BY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK IN ORDER FOR THE STUDENT TO ATTEND THE PROGRAM.

Revised 8/19/24

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MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Canon Law, the law of the Church, states that “parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of Christian life by word and example (Can. 774 §2). The General Directory for Catechesis, the National Directory for Catechesis, and many other Church documents resound this sentiment. At your child's baptism, you accepted "the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith" and acknowledged "your duty to bring your child up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor" (Rite of Baptism). St. Albert the Great Parish recognizes and affirms parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children. Its parish religious education programs exist to assist parents in fulfilling their obligation by providing them with a formal, structured, and planned program of catechesis and formation.

MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Albert the Great’s Religious Education Program exists solely for the purpose of accompanying and assisting parents in catechizing their children. To that end, we strive to evangelize families in the gospel of Jesus Christ, deepen their awareness and understanding of God’s loving presence in their lives, provide opportunities to live and give witness to their Catholic faith, and to form them in a life of intentional discipleship.

CORE PRINCIPLES

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 and 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 growth in the individual's spiritual life through the Mass, Rosary, personal 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 needs to be respected accordingly.

In addition, the Religious Education Programs assist parents in their God given role as educators in the faith life of their children by:

- Providing religious education classes for children.
- Providing opportunities for prayer, adoration, service, liturgy, and stewardship within the program for students, parents, and families.
- Providing opportunities for families to participate in liturgies, seasonal activities, and works of mercy.
- Providing regular opportunities for families to become involved in forming their children in the Catholic faith.

FAMILY CATECHESIS OPTION POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Families report to St. Albert the Great School parish hall following the 10 AM Mass. Those families that do not attend the 10 AM Mass are expected to report to the hall no later than 11:00 AM. The actual start time of the session may vary depending on when Mass concludes. Family Sessions will conclude 75 minutes after the start time, but no later than 12:30 PM regardless of start time.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Revised 8/3/23

Every month, families will be expected to complete four chapters for a given Unit at home using the student textbook and materials provided on the *Finding God* website. These assignments are a necessary and required component of the Family Catechesis Option. Families that fail to complete the required assignments may be prohibited from enrolling in the Family Catechesis Option the following year.

To complete the monthly chapter assignments, parent must do the following:

- Go to <https://classroom.google.com/> and login with your child's user name and password and then download the **At-Home Edition** for the Unit assigned that month.
- Work at home with your child using the downloaded **At-Home Edition** to complete the four sessions assigned as indicated on the Family Catechesis Calendar.
- All pages in the student textbook must be completed prior to the next Sunday Family Catechesis Session and will be checked by the catechist for completion.
- Once the session work has been completed in the textbook, the student **MUST** complete the **Unit Review** – a PDF assessment covering the entire unit which is posted in the student's Google Classroom. A hard copy will also be distributed to students the month prior to its due date.
 - This review must be printed, completed, and submitted directly to the catechist at the next Sunday Family Catechesis session. It will be graded and the grade will be posted in the student's Google Classroom.
 - Parents may also opt to email pictures of the completed assessment to the catechist or upload the completed assessment directly to their child's Google Classroom.

Parents should direct any inquiries they have about the **At-Home** material or process to the Program Director by calling 215-947-3641 or through email at dre@satg1.org.

ATTENDANCE

Revised 8/1/22

The entire family is welcomed and encouraged to attend the Family Sessions and program activities. However, at the minimum, children must be accompanied by an adult family member at every Family Session and program activity.

Families will be expected to attend all nine (9) Sunday Sessions barring extenuating circumstances, such as illness or family emergency, and no more than two sessions can be missed under such circumstances. Families that miss more than two sessions may be required to complete the remainder of the program year in the traditional weekly program.

Participation in sports and extracurricular activities are not considered extenuating circumstances. In addition, family events (e.g., parties, celebrations, etc.) and vacations are also not considered extenuating circumstances and should be planned around the Sunday Family Sessions so that they do not conflict with a family's participation in said sessions.

For those families that miss a Family Catechesis Session due to extenuating circumstances, the material presented during the session will be made available online for parents to review at home. Parents will be responsible for teaching the entire Unit (five chapters) that month instead of four chapters.

Families that do not meet all of the program requirements by the end of the program year (i.e., May 31), may not be invited to participate in the Family Catechesis Option the following year.

CATECHETICAL STAFF & PERSONNEL

Saint Albert the Great religious education programs participate in and adhere to the Safe Environment Program (SEP) mandated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This policy has been in effect in all Archdiocesan parishes, schools, and children's programs since 2002, and has undergone several revisions as the SEP and State Law have evolved. All Program personnel are required to abide by the Safe Environment Program of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which includes the following:

REQUIRED TRAININGS

- ***Safe Environment Training session.*** This training is mandated by and provided through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The training session is about two and a half hours long and must be completed by new employees and volunteers within 90 days of beginning service with Saint Albert the Great CCD. This training needs to be completed one time only.
- ***Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries (SMBB).*** All volunteers and employees must agree in writing to abide by and uphold the SMBB, which will be presented at the *Safe Environment Training Session*.
- ***Mandated Reporter Training:*** This training is required by PA State Law and is provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It consists of three 20 minutes training modules,

which can be completed online. This training will be updated from time to time as PA State Law requires. Volunteers will be notified when this training requires updating. The entire training must be completed within 14 days of beginning service with Saint Albert the Great CCD.

REQUIRED BACKGROUND CHECKS

- **PA State Police Criminal Record Check.** To be completed prior to beginning service with Saint Albert the Great CCD (free for volunteers). Must be renewed every five years.
- **PA Child Abuse History Clearance.** To be completed prior to beginning service with the Saint Albert the Great CCD (free for volunteers). Must be renewed every five years.
- **Federal Background Check (Fingerprinting):** Required only of volunteers who reside outside of Pennsylvania or who have resided outside Pennsylvania any time within the last 10 years (fee paid for by the volunteer and reimbursed by the parish once the processed clearance and receipt for payment have been submitted). To be completed prior to beginning service in Saint Albert the Great CCD. Must be renewed every five years until 10 years of PA residency is attained. Thereafter, the volunteer must submit a *Disclosure Statement Application* every five years (see next bullet point).
- **Disclosure Statement Application.** To be completed every five years by volunteers who have resided in PA for at least 10 years.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the Family Catechesis Option follows the religion guidelines established by Archdiocese of Philadelphia. These Guidelines may be viewed and downloaded by parents at: <http://phillyocf.org/prep-resources/>.

CUSTODY POLICY

The Program will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the program director with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. The Program will request these documents at the time of registration. If either Custodial Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the revised document to the program director immediately. This is also true in the event that such an agreement is issued after the time of enrollment. In the absence of such documentation the program will and must assume that parents share legal custody.

Our Program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our program will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other 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 Director with an official and the latest copy of the court order.

If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the Program Director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the parish Program expects the cooperation of both parents, especially in regards to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

DISCIPLINE

The Program is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching and a life of discipleship. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, or the Gospel, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, bullying, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment (including but not limited to social media posts, texting, emails, etc.). Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form from students or their family members.

Conduct by students, family members, or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the parish is grounds for disciplinary action. Conduct that includes cases of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic (including but not limited to social media posts, texting, emails, etc.), against any member of the program community, is grounds for immediate dismissal from the Program, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The Program Director makes the final determination of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of class, in the Program generally, and outside the Program, where such improper behavior affects the Program community. The Program Director will make the final determination as to what behaviors warrant disciplinary action.

BULLYING

Acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation and bullying (including cyber bullying and the like) are unacceptable behaviors and are prohibited in our Programs. Program personnel cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under their direct supervision. However, to the extent such conduct affects the environment of the Program, and the rights and welfare of the

students, and is within the control of the Program in its normal operations, it is the Program's intent to prevent bullying and thus, will take action to investigate, respond, discipline and remediate any acts of bullying. Administration, catechetical staff, and all Program participants are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect, and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying, etc. If incidents do occur, families should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. There will be no retaliation against a victim, reporter, or witness.

Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person's reputation that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning and Program environments. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

If the bully is threatening harm, a student should tell a catechist, adult volunteer and/or the Program Director immediately so that action can be taken to remediate the situation. Parents that become aware of a bullying situation should speak directly with the Program director. Parents/guardians and the pastor will be notified of the situation, and Law Enforcement Officials may be contacted if warranted (e.g., someone threatened with a weapon, terroristic threats, etc.).

CONTRABAND

BRINGING CONTRABAND TO PROGRAM SESSIONS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL BE CONFISCATED AND RETURNED TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS ONLY! Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.

- Items considered contraband include, but are not limited to gum, toys, electronic games, iPods, iPads, mp3 players, weapons, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products.
- It is unlawful for minors to be in the possession of alcohol or tobacco products. Students found to be in the possession of such products may be immediately suspended from the program. Depending on the contraband confiscated, the proper legal authorities could be notified.
- Students will be immediately dismissed from the program and all proper and necessary authorities will be notified if they or their family members bring weapons, drugs or drug paraphernalia of any kind onto parish property.

VANDALISM

The CCD Programs share space with St. Albert the Great School community. As such it is imperative that a healthy relationship be maintained between the two programs. All students and their families are expected to respect parish property, which includes the school facilities and all items in the classroom.

At no time are students permitted to use, touch, or borrow any material or items from the desks of St. Albert the Great School students. Catechists are provided with classroom supplies and other essentials and will make them available to students when needed.

Incidents of vandalism to parish property, including school facilities, and the property of St. Albert the Great School students will be taken most seriously. The parents of any student who is found to be responsible for an incident of vandalism will be required to make restitution for the damage inflicted. The school and parish will prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law and take appropriate disciplinary action which may include suspension or dismissal from the program for serious acts of vandalism.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Revised 8/1/22

Parents will be dismissed from the parish hall approximately five minutes prior to the end of the session to retrieve their children from the classrooms, which are all located on the first floor of the school building. Sessions will conclude 75 minutes after the start time, but no later than 12:30 PM regardless of start time.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Program realizes that devices such as cell phones and smart phones have become a necessary and convenient technological and communication tool for both parents and children. In order to prevent such devices from becoming a distraction while at the Family Session we have established the following policy:

- Students will be asked to leave all electronic devices with parents prior to reporting to class.
- Parents will be asked to turn off cell phones during the Family Session.

ASSESSMENTS

Revised 8/1/22

Students need to exhibit proficient mastery of the required material for their grade level to be considered for promotion at the end of the year. Assessing student progress provides feedback to students, parents, and catechists alike, allows corrective measures to be taken when necessary to help ensure that a student's proficient mastery is attained, and ensures that families receive assistance as needed to help them succeed.

Students are required to complete a Unit Assessment that will be provided as a PDF document in the student's Google Classroom. This assessment should be printed and completed once the entire Unit (all five sessions) have been completed by the student. The assessment must be turned into the catechist at the next Sunday Family Catechesis Session.

The grades for the Unit Assessment will be posted in the student's Google Classroom. The Catechist may recommend that certain pages, concepts, or material be reviewed with a student if the assessment indicates that further review is warranted to ensure mastery of the material has been attained. Catechists will communicate this information directly to parents via email.

Students that fail to complete and submit the Unit Assessments will be withheld from year-end promotion until all outstanding work and assessments have been satisfactorily completed and submitted. The Program Director reserves the right to administer a written Archdiocesan assessment to ensure that a student is proficient in the key objectives established for their grade level by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for the Family Catechesis Option families must meet the following requirements:

- Attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis
- Be a registered member of St. Albert the Great Parish for at least one year, or had children enrolled in St. Albert the Great weekly CCD Program for at least one full program year.
- Complete all registration forms and submit all required paperwork and fees at the time of registration.
- Have a reliable Internet connection for email and access to online materials.

ENROLLMENT

Saint Albert the Great CCD Programs are structured around incremental learning. That is, each year builds upon and expands the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in a CCD Program consistently from year-to-year.

Any student who does not re-enroll in a program option for a period of a year or more, and who does not enroll in another CCD, PREP, or Catholic School during that period will be placed in the grade level they were scheduled to attend prior to their leaving the program (e.g., after completing 3rd grade a student does not re-enroll in any program until 6th grade. The student has missed two years of formation and will therefore be placed into a 4th grade class upon re-enrollment).

Any student who does not complete the program year due to voluntarily withdrawing from the Program or failing to meet the Program requirements will be required to repeat the grade level upon re-enrollment unless other arrangements have been made with the Program Director.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia REQUIRES a minimum of two consecutive years of formation prior to a child receiving a sacrament. Students who leave the Program following First Holy Communion in 2nd grade and re-enroll in 7th grade in order to receive Confirmation DO NOT meet this requirement. Therefore, their reception of Confirmation will be deferred until they satisfy this requirement.

GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Revised 8/1/22

All students will be assigned a unique username and be provided with a password to access Google Classroom for their class. Catechists will utilize Google Classroom to post links to the Unit Assessments, as well as the link to the parent lesson plans and other resources that may assist parents in implementing the lessons at home with their children.

Please note that the student username, while in the format of an email account, does not have email access. It is a username only. Parents are instructed to record their child's username and password in a safe place. If the password is forgotten, it can take approximately one to three business days for IT to reset the password, as passwords can only be reset during normal business hours.

Parents will be invited to join the Google Classroom so that they may receive email notifications when grades, reminders, assignments, and information are posted.

PARTICIPATION

Families must come to the Family Sessions ready to participate in the planned activities. No lesson or activity will prove worthwhile if those in attendance do not invest themselves in the process. Participation also means that families come to the Family Sessions prepared. Students must have the proper materials for class including, but not limited to, their textbook, writing implement, and copybook. Additional supplies may be required and will be conveyed by catechists. Families should have all chapter assignments and the Unit Assessment for the previous month completed.

PROGRAM FEES

Program fees are a necessary part of the Program and help ensure that the Program can provide families with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs.

The Program fee is due in full at the time of registration. Anyone who cannot pay the fee in full at the time of registration or who has difficulty making payment due to hardship should contact the Program Director to discuss other accommodations.

In addition, there may be certain material fees associated with sacramental preparation that are in addition to the Program fee. These material fees cover incidentals associated with sacramental preparation, including, but not limited to, sacramental enrichment packets, retreat experiences, guest speakers, certificates, etc. These fees have separate due dates which will be provided to families of sacramental candidates under separate cover.

In the event that a family voluntarily withdraws from the Program during the program year, or is dismissed from the Program for any reason including, but not limited to poor attendance, a disciplinary incident, or the possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or a weapon on parish property, no refund of any fees will be made to the family.

PROMOTION

Revised 8/1/22

In order to be eligible for promotion to the next CCD level at the end of the program year, students must exhibit proficient mastery of the material required for their grade level. Mastery lists are provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for each grade level on corresponding scope and sequence charts. Mastery is evaluated through the administration of Five Unit Assessments throughout the course of the program year. In addition to these assessments, the timely completion of chapter assignments, classroom participation, and overall attendance are also considered when evaluating a student's eligibility for year-end promotion.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Catechesis for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation is incorporated into the Program curriculum. However, there are additional aspects of the preparation process that are outside the scope of the classroom setting that pertain to students and their families, the specific details of which will be provided to parents under separate cover.

To be eligible to begin sacramental preparation a student must meet the following criteria:

- Be enrolled in CCD and/or Catholic School for two consecutive years;
- Be in Level 2 or above for Penance and/or Eucharist;
- Be in Level 7 or above for Confirmation;
- **Be attending Sunday Mass on a weekly basis**

To receive a sacrament the candidate must meet the following criteria:

- The candidate must express a desire to receive the Sacrament;
- The candidate must be properly disposed to receive the Sacrament;
- The candidate must exhibit the proper disposition to receive the Sacrament

NON-PARISHIONER FAMILIES:

Archdiocesan sacramental policy stipulates that sacramental candidates receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation in the parish where their family is registered. Non-parishioner families who desire to have their child receive these sacraments at St. Albert the Great Church must obtain a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish where they are registered in order for their child to receive the sacrament at St. Albert the Great.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT LESSONS

Revised 8/29/19

As part of its Safe Environment Program (SEP), the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education (OCE) in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Office for Children and Youth Protection (OCYP) provides all students enrolled in Catholic and Religious Education with grade appropriate lessons on the topic of keeping themselves safe. This program, known as *KidTalk*, is new for 2019. The lessons are available electronically for parents at <https://bit.ly/2Z4T8nK>. Parents are required to administer these lessons at home with their children and will be asked to submit online verification once the lesson has been completed.

Parents who do not wish conduct these lessons at home with their children are required by OCYP to complete an Opt Out Form, which is available from the Program Director. This form will become part of the student's permanent record, and a copy will also be submitted to the OCYP per their policy. Opt Out Forms must be renewed yearly.

SNACKS & REFRESHMENTS

Revised 8/1/22

As part of the fellowship and building of community in the Family Catechesis Option, light refreshments will be served to families upon their arrival. Parents who have food allergies or who have children with such allergies are urged to exercise caution when choosing refreshments as we cannot guarantee that the products made available will be allergen free. Students are not permitted to bring any food items with them when they report to the classrooms.

SNOW EMERGENCIES & PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

In the event of inclement weather on the day of a Family Session, parents will be emailed by 8:00 AM to inform them of the session's status. In the event of a program cancellation, the Family Session will not be made up. Parents will be responsible for completing all five chapters for the assigned Unit that month at home with their children. The material that would have been presented to parents at the cancelled session will be made available online to parents for their review.

TEXTBOOKS

The textbooks used in the Program are approved by the Archdiocesan Office for Catholic Education, and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Every student will be assigned a textbook. This textbook is a necessary tool in helping the catechist achieve the required learning objectives and will be checked monthly for the completion of at home assignments. Therefore, students must bring their textbooks to every Family Session. Parents should exercise caution in making sure that the textbook is secured in a set place within the home so it is not lost during the academic year. Lost textbooks will need to be replaced. Parents assume full responsibility for all costs associated with the replacement textbook including any taxes, shipping, and handling fees.

FAMILY CATECHESIS COMPONENTS

CLARIFICATIONS

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

1. To be eligible for this program option, a family must attend Sunday Mass regularly, which is defined as weekly Mass attendance.
2. To be eligible for this program, participants must be members of St. Albert the Great Parish. Families transferring from another parish without physically moving into the parish boundaries will need to attend the Tuesday CCD Option or Homeschooling Option for one year before being eligible to participate in the Family Catechesis Program.

DEFINING FAMILY CATECHESIS

This program option is grounded in family catechesis and therefore depends on the family's participation for a student to succeed. The Program defines the family as the student, and any parents and siblings living in the same household. If the family, as defined, cannot participate in a Family Session, Spiritual, or Act of Mercy activity, then at least one parent must accompany the student and participate in the activity with the student. If both parents are unavailable due to work, then a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or godparent may stand in the parent's place. Parents of other students enrolled in the Program **DO NOT** meet this definition and may not serve as a substitute for another student's parent unless they are directly related to said student.

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION

The nature of this program encompasses all of the components outlined herein this document, explicitly the Formation, Spiritual, and Acts of Mercy Components. As such, families must meet all of the requirements for each component by the end of the Program year (May 31), or they will be prohibited from participating in the Family Catechesis Option the following year. The Program will provide the opportunities for parents, students, and families to participate in various component related activities throughout the course of the year, but it is the responsibility of parents to make sure that they and the student fulfill the Program requirements.

FORMATION COMPONENT

The formation component of the Program is comprised of two parts: the monthly in-person Family Sessions and the At-Home Assignments. These are defined below.

FAMILY SESSIONS

A monthly Family Session will be held on the 2nd Sunday of the Month immediately following the 10 AM Mass. See Arrival Procedures and Dismissal Procedures for details on session start and end times. Family Sessions are limited to one hour and fifteen minutes.

- Families gather in a large group setting for refreshments following Mass.
- After communal prayer, a brief presentation introduces families to the theme for the month. Facilitated conversation leads to an exchange of how the theme applies to daily life

today, and families are challenged to discuss and identify ways in which they can incorporate the theme in daily life. Then children then report to classrooms with catechists while parents remain in the hall.

- In the classroom setting, children are presented with the first session of a thematic unit. Each thematic unit is comprised of five chapters (four centered on the theme and a shorter chapter focused on the Liturgical seasons in the Church). The theme is the same for all grade levels (1 – 6).
- Parents remain in the hall and receive an introduction to the unit and a guidance on how to present the material in an age-appropriate way to their children.
- After the prescribed time, parents will be dismissed to report to the classrooms to pick up their children.

FAMILY SESSION DATES AND THEMES

Please see the Program Calendar for Session Dates and Themes. The calendar also has the dates for spiritual activities and acts of mercy listed.

AT-HOME ASSIGNMENTS

- See At-Home Assignments under Family Catechesis Option Program Policies and Procedures for specific details on this aspect of the Formation Component.
- The material presented to parents at the Family Sessions will assist and prepare them for presenting the remaining four chapters of the unit to their children at home at their convenience over the remainder of the month.
- Detailed lesson plans are available to parents in PDF format on *Finding God 2021 Website* <https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/finding-god/finding-god-2021/parents-and-students/> as well as the student's Google Classroom <https://classroom.google.com/>
- When students complete all chapters for an assigned Unit, they take a Unit Assessment at home, and submit the assessment to the Catechist at the next Family Session. This assessment will be graded.
- No Assessments or Units are assigned for the months of December and March.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Program Director will be present on all dates related to the Formation Component and will track family attendance for this component. In addition, catechists will use the Unit Assessments to track student progress and will check the student's textbook for completion to ensure that families are completing the at-home assignments.

SPIRITUAL COMPONENT

The Spiritual Component of the program consists of two parts: two Spiritual Activities and participation in the Sacrament of Penance at least once during the Program year. The parts are defined more fully below.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Families are expected to attend two spiritual activities at St. Albert the Great Parish. Please consult the program calendar for a list of events and opportunities. The events provided on the calendar are not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added during the program year as additional options for families become available.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (CONFESSIONS)

The 2nd Precept of the Church obliges all Catholics to receive the Sacrament of Penance a minimum of once a year unless they are in a state of mortal sin in which case, they should seek the sacrament immediately. As the Family Catechesis Option does not offer an opportunity for children to receive the sacrament of Penance in a formal way as the traditional Tuesday CCD Option does, parents are expected to take their child to receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once during the year. Participating in the Sacrament of Penance is in addition to the two Spiritual Activities required of families.

The Sacrament of Penance is offered at the following times:

- Saturday afternoons from 4:00 – 4:45 PM in the church chapel.
- Sunday mornings from 11:00 – 11:45 AM in the church chapel.

ACCOUNTABILTY

The families are responsible for notifying the Program Director when they attend a Spiritual Activity in the parish. Such notification must be in the form of an email sent to the Program Director at dre@satg1.org. The Program Director will maintain a record of each family's progress for the Spiritual Component.

ACTS OF MERCY COMPONENT

Families are expected to complete two Acts of Mercy offered by St. Albert the Great Parish. Acts of Mercy outside of the parish may not be used by a family to satisfy this Component at this time. Please consult the program calendar for a list of events and opportunities. The events provided on the calendar are not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added during the program year as additional options for families become available.

When engaging in Acts of Mercy, children should be actively involved.

ACCOUNTABILTY

The families are responsible for notifying the Program Director when they complete an Act of Mercy Activity in the parish. Such notification must be in the form of an email sent to the Program Director at dre@satg1.org. The Program Director will maintain a record of each family's progress for the Act of Mercy Component.

COMMUNICATION

CALENDAR AND COMMUNIQUEÉS

The latest and most up-to-date program calendar will always be available on the parish website at www.saintalthegreat.org/ccd.html. This calendar will contain all pertinent dates related to CCD and sacramental preparation. The online calendar supersedes any yearly calendar distributed at the beginning of the program year.

Important reminders, updates, and program related news, including calendar changes, will be conveyed to parents via the email address provided at the time of student registration. It is the parent's responsibility to inform the Program Director of changes to this email address in order to ensure effective communication of program related matters.

COMMUNICATION FOLDERS

Every student will be issued a two-pocket folder at the beginning of the program year. This folder will serve as the Communication Folder for class assignments and other important papers. Parents should check this folder following each session to view any fliers, bulletins, assignments, etc., that may be sent home. Parents are also to use this folder to send any communiqués to their child's catechist or program staff.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Parents should feel free to contact the Program Director regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The Program Director may be contacted using any of the means listed below. However, the quickest response will be obtained via email.

Program Director's Office: 215-947-3641

E-mail: dre@satg1.org

Website: <http://saintalthegreat.org>

Additional Numbers to Know:

Rectory Office: 215-947-3500

Rectory Fax: 215-938-9071

UPDATING CONTACT INFORMATION

The contact information that you provide at the time of registration will be used as the primary means of contacting you. Updating changes to this information, especially changes to email addresses, is your sole responsibility. In order to receive necessary and vital information pertaining to your child's participation in our program it is imperative that you notify the Program Director as to any changes in address, phone numbers, or email.

FINAL NOTE

It is imperative that parents provide the Program Director with feedback regarding their experience throughout the course of the Program Year. The program may need to be amended during the course of the Program Year in order to better accommodate families and improve the overall experience of families. Parents are encouraged to contact the Program Director at any time with questions or concerns and/or to provide feedback they deem important.