

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

2024



# Home Based 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).

**THE GREAT  
OFFICE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
HOME BASED CATECHESIS HANDBOOK**

THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS CERTAIN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT CCD PROGRAM'S HOMESCHOOLING OPTION (HEREIN KNOWN AS THE HBC 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*

# 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.

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING FOR HOMESCHOOLING OPTION

As a parent of a student enrolled in our homeschooling option, you are requesting of St. Albert the Great parish, that your child(ren) be excused from regular attendance in our parish religious education program for the purpose of homebased catechesis, which is defined by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia “as the work of Catholic parents/guardians who undertake the formal religious education of **their own** child(ren) for any length of time and in **their** home.”

The pastor or his appointee has agreed to excuse the student(s) from regular attendance in the parish religious education program for the purpose of homebased catechesis under the direct supervision of the director of religious education. This privilege can be revoked by the parents at any time should their circumstances change and they wish to switch to one of our other in-person program options or by the pastor or DRE should the student(s) not be meeting the expectations and requirements of the homeschooling option.

## CONDITIONS FOR ENROLLMENT AND PARTICIPATION

1. The student(s) is (are) now and shall remain during any period of homebased catechesis, a student of the parish religious education program, subject to the policies and regulations of the program, as outlined in the Parent & Participant Handbook except to the extent that those policies are inconsistent with or contrary to the conditions listed in this agreement; in addition, the student(s) is (are) subject to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s Guidelines for Home-Based Catechesis of Children.
2. Participation in this program option will be overseen by the director of religious education who shall certify that efficient catechesis is being provided to the student(s) for the period noted above. The director may at any time during such period, terminate this agreement, if in the opinion of the director, the student(s) is (are) not receiving efficient catechesis.
3. It is agreed that the following shall constitute the required standards of catechesis for the student(s):
  - a) Basic Instruction in the Catholic Faith as required by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
  - b) Hours of Instruction consistent with the expectations of the Parish Religious Education Program, that is, a minimum of 1.5 hours a week, per session of homebased catechesis.
  - c) Program of Study shall consist of the following:
    - a. Archdiocesan Scope of Sequence for the Student’s Grade Level  
Available at <http://phillyocf.org/prep-resources/>
    - b. Archdiocesan Religion Guidelines for the Student’s Grade Level  
Available at <http://phillyocf.org/prep-resources/>
    - c. Archdiocesan Approved Religion Textbook for the Student’s Grade Level

- d. Calendar of Assignments and Due Dates
  - e. Access to Google Classroom for the posting and submission of assignments.
  - f. Additional resources as outlined & determined by the program director, which will be made available via Google Classroom and/or email.
- d) Place of Instruction shall be the Home of the student's parent(s) or guardian(s); and only for the child(ren) who are registered from this home; and only the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student(s) named above is (are) authorized to provide this instruction.
- e) Additional Program Requirements:
- a. Participation in at least two (2) Spiritual Activities in the parish
  - b. Participation in at least two (2) Acts of Mercy in the parish
  - c. Reception of the Sacrament of Penance at least once during the program year for students in grades 3 through 8.
  - d. Students preparing for the reception of Penance, First Holy Communion, and/or Confirmation will have additional expectations set forth under separate cover concerning their preparation for these sacraments. These requirements and expectations are separate from this agreement and may include additional assignments, participation in rehearsals and retreats, and parental participation in evenings of reflection for each sacrament.
4. It is also agreed that the following shall constitute the conditions for evaluation of such instruction:
- a) Evaluation processes to be specified by the program director to appropriately assess student(s) achievement and level of comprehension of instruction provided.
    - a. Evaluation shall include testing in written and/or oral form
    - b. Interviews with the Pupil(s)
    - c. Evaluation by any other methods deemed suitable for students with special needs.
5. It is agreed and understood that for the purpose of ensuring satisfactory progress in the homebased catechesis program that the following shall be adhered to by the program director, parent(s) or guardian(s) and the student(s):
- a) The program director will contact the parents approximately every six weeks to "check in" on student progress. If needed, an in-person meeting may be called for to address any areas of concerns on the part of the program director or the parent.
  - b) Unit Assessments will be used to determine if any material needs to be reviewed or reinforced at home, as well as gauge student progress in the HBC Option. These assessments are to be completed after the student has completed all of the sessions for the Unit. The assessments must be printed, completed, and submitted directly to the program director at [dre@satg1.org](mailto:dre@satg1.org). Submissions may be in the form of photos or scanned documents. Assessment may also be submitted in-person by dropping them off at the rectory office to the attention of the program director. The assessments will serve as confirmation that the student has completed the session assignments.

- c) Parent(s) or guardian(s) should email the program director with any questions or issues regarding the implementation of a session.
6. It is also agreed and understood that the parish and its representatives shall not be liable in respect to any injury sustained during the period that the student(s) is (are) excused from regular attendance in the parish religious education program for the purpose of homebased catechesis.

## AT-HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Following the HBC, families will be expected to complete five chapters for each Unit (25 chapters in all) at home using the student textbook, materials provided on the *Finding God* website, and resources posted in the student's Google Classroom. These assignments are a necessary and required component of the HBC Option. Families that fail to complete the required assignments may be prohibited from enrolling in the HBC 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 five sessions assigned as indicated on the HBC Calendar.
- All pages in the student textbook must be completed and may be checked by the program director when in-person meetings or gatherings are conducted.
- Once the student has completed a Unit in the textbook, the student ***MUST*** complete the **Unit Assessment** – a PDF assessment covering the entire unit (all five chapters) which is posted in the student's Google Classroom.
  - This review must be completed and submitted directly to the program director at [dre@satg1.org](mailto:dre@satg1.org). It will be graded and the grade will be posted in the student's Google Classroom.
  - Any student obtaining less than 70% on an assessment will be required to retake and resubmit the Unit Assessment after a thorough review of the material by the parent.
  - 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](mailto:dre@satg1.org).

## ASSESSMENTS

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 program director upon completion.

The grades for the Unit Assessment will be posted in the student's Google Classroom. The program director 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. The program director 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.

## CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the HBC 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/>.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for the HBC Option families must meet the following requirements:

- ***Attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis – This Requirement Is Firm. One cannot effectively teach the faith if one is not actively living the faith.***
- Be a registered member of St. Albert the Great Parish, or had children enrolled in another religious education program option offered by St. Albert the Great for at least one full program year.
- Complete all registration forms 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 3<sup>rd</sup> grade a student does not re-enroll in any program until 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The student has missed two years of formation and will therefore be placed into a 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and re-enroll in 7<sup>th</sup> 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

All students will be assigned a unique username and be provided with a password to access Google Classroom for the HBC option. Google Classroom is used to post links to the Unit Assessments, as well as the links 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.

## 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 for the HBC option is due in full at the time of registration and required for textbooks and materials to be issued to a student. 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 HBC option during the program year, or is dismissed from the program for any reason including, but not limited to failure to meet program expectations and requirements, no refund of any fees will be made to the family. Parents who request to switch to in-person learning during the course of the program year will be charged the difference in program rate, receiving a credit for payment received for the HBC option.

## PROMOTION

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, Archdiocesan assessment may be administered if the Program Director has cause for concern regarding a student's mastery of the required material.

## 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 HBC option 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**

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.

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The nature of the HBC option prohibits students from participating in spiritual and service-oriented activities that are a part of the in-person learning experience. Therefore, the HBC option has set forth the following expectations for all families participating in this option. Failure to fulfill these requirements may result in the family being denied this option the following program year.

- The completion of at least two spiritual activities within the parish community during the course of the program year.
- The completion of at least two service-oriented activities (i.e., Acts of Mercy) within the parish community during the course of the program year.
- Reception of the sacrament of Penance at least once during the course of the program year for students in grades 3 – 8.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

The families are responsible for notifying the Program Director when they complete any of the activities used to fulfill these requirements. Such notification must be in the form of an email sent to the Program Director at [dre@satg1.org](mailto:dre@satg1.org). The Program Director will maintain a record of each family's progress for the Spiritual Activities, Act of Mercy, and Penance components.

### SPIRITUAL COMPONENT

#### SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Families are expected to attend two spiritual activities at St. Albert the Great Parish. These activities include any of the events and liturgies listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families. Dates and times subject to change.

- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Rectory Chapel
  - Weekly on Tuesday's from 8:30 AM – 7:00 PM
- Living Rosary (October 20)
- All Soul's Remembrance Mass (November 2)
- Parish Mission (November 10, 11, 12)
- Festival of Carols (December 15)
- Ash Wednesday (March 5)
- Stations of the Cross (March 7, 14, 21, 28, & Apr 4, 11, 18 @ 7 PM)
- Living Stations of the Cross (March 15)
- Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper (March 17 @ 7 PM)
- Good Friday Veneration of the Cross (March 18 @ 3 PM)
- Easter Vigil (March 19 @ 7:30 PM)
- May Procession (May 14 @ 7 PM)

## 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. The Acts of Mercy include any of the events listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families. When engaging in Acts of Mercy, children should be actively involved. Dates and times subject to change.

- Making Casseroles for St. John's Hospice – ongoing
- Making meals for Caring for Friends (formerly Aids for Friends) – ongoing
- Food Drive for Holy Innocents Food Pantry – ongoing
- Sandwich Sunday – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month after 10 AM Mass
- Trunk or Treat – October 25
- KofC Pancake Breakfast – October 27
- All Soul's Remembrance – Month of November (Praying for the deceased)
- Lunch with Santa – December 7
- Advent Giving Tree – starts Thanksgiving Day through December 15
- KofC Pancake Breakfast – March 16
- Poor Man's Supper – April 18
- Baby Bottle Drive – starts Mother's Day through Father's Day

## SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (CONFESSIONS)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 – 11:30 AM in the church chapel.
- Additional times maybe made available during Advent and Lent

# COMMUNICATION

## CALENDAR AND COMMUNIQUE'S

The HBC Calendar is posted in Google Classroom for easy access by parents. 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.

## 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](mailto:dre@satg1.org)

**Website:** <http://saintalhegreat.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.