



**Saint Aloysius
Religious Education
Family Handbook**

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**Saint Aloysius Parish
219 Bloomfield Avenue
Caldwell, NJ 07006**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At the center of Religious Education and Sacramental Formation lies a vision of what it is to be a member of the Catholic Church and the great privilege of participating in her mission. Whatever the questions that face the Church and whatever challenges presented to her by contemporary culture, we know that we stand in a Tradition that has faced similar questions and challenges in the past. Yet because of God's faithfulness, the essence of the Church remains constant in all time. The good witness and the holiness of the lives of so many men and women, boys and girls, is daily proof of God's fidelity to His People in history. Whatever the statistics show or the theories explain, this is our Truth: The Lord has saved us and lives in our midst.

It is something we know and experience. It is why we believe and belong.

Parents and Guardians, example is the best teacher. For Catholics, Sunday Mass is not an option; it is a Divine Commandment. That one hour of worship as a family (one hour out of 168 hours per week!) can be a special blessing for you and your children. Please take this obligation seriously.

A special thank you to our dedicated Religious Education staff and our wonderful complement of Catechists. They are volunteers, giving generously of their time and talent. Please cooperate with them.

In his primer for religious education and formation, St. Augustine reminds us that the dialogue of life is not about us but about God - the God who is love. This is both the means and the end of our transmission of our Faith to our young people.

St. Augustine taught: "Take this love, therefore, as the end that is set before you, to which you are to refer all that you say and, whatever you teach, teach it in such a manner that he or she to whom you are discoursing... on hearing may believe, on believing may have hope, and on hoping may have love." (DeCat. Rud. 4.8)

God's blessing on you and your children.

Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. Msgr. Michael J. Desmond
Pastor

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Reverend Juan Jose Esteban	Parochial Vicar
Reverend Jose de Jesus Rodriguez	Parochial Vicar
Reverend Monsignor Michael Kelly	Weekend Assistant
Joseph J. Wozniak	Music Minister
Cathy Sullivan	Parish Secretary
Maureen Coleman	Parish Personnel Secretary
Larry Petrallia	Maintenance Director

PHILOSOPHY

Saint Aloysius Faith Formation Programs are committed to a dynamic partnership with parents in the religious education of their children. Parents, by word and example, teach their children from birth throughout life. At their child's Baptism, parents undertake responsibility of providing for his/her Christian formation. The Religious Education staff strives to assist parents to build on and continue that Christian formation with formal classes. This partnership between parents and Religious Education staff requires ongoing communication and collaboration.

In our classes, we seek to provide the catechesis and skills building needed for each child to grow and mature, as far as each is able, in understanding, positive attitudes, and faithful practice of the Catholic faith (see 1 Cor. 13:11). We strive, therefore, to assist each child in committing him or herself to a relationship with God characterized by a lifelong pattern of enthusiastic sacramental life, prayer, Christian service, and growth in understanding of the Catholic faith.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

- ◆ To assist parents in passing the Catholic faith on to their children.
- ◆ To foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and actions, especially Sunday Mass and Holy Days.
- ◆ To develop an understanding of the Catholic faith and practices in the everyday lives of the students and their families.
- ◆ To inspire a sense of responsibility for service to the Church, community and the world.
- ◆ To prepare the students to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation, and to encourage and facilitate active and frequent participation of Eucharist and Reconciliation.

OFFICE HOURS

The Religious Education Office is located in the Parish Center at 253 Bloomfield Avenue, Caldwell, NJ 07006. Normal office hours are Monday - Thursday 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM. The Parish Center is closed Friday - Sunday. Please mail or drop through the mail slot all correspondence directly to the Parish Center.

REGISTRATION

Registration is required for all students in the Religious Education Program. This includes individual forms for each child in a family. We admit all public school and non-Catholic private school students, who are registered members of our parish. A copy of the child's Baptismal Certificate should be submitted when registering for the first time. If transferring from a Catholic school or another Religious Education program please also submit their transfer letter/transcript.

Parents are requested to list and explain on the registration form all of the health issues of the child. If a new health issue occurs during the school year, parents should write a note to the Program Leader and to the child's teacher. If your child requires the use of an **Inhaler** or **EpiPen**, please contact the Program Leader to obtain and file the proper medical form.

In order to provide quality experiences for our students, catechists and aides, we try to limit the number of students in each class. Requests will be honored whenever possible as class size and space permit when registration is completed by the due date. If your requested class has no openings, we may find it necessary for your child to be placed in another open class. All requests for changes must be made in writing, or email, and include the student's name and reason for change. Requests will be considered along with class sizes and available teachers. All requests for changes made after September 30 will incur a \$10 fee per student.

Returning student registrations received after the August deadline will be assessed a late fee. In addition, your child may be delayed in their religious education studies or may be required to attend on a different day than the one selected.

TUITION

Tuition is noted on your child's registration form. As a courtesy to our full-time Catechists and Aides the registration fee is waived. There is also an Activities Fee associated with the Sacramental Preparation Programs. Financial difficulties should not prevent you from registering your child/children, please call the office to discuss - NO child will be turned away.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFERINGS

Monday Sessions: Pre-K through 6th grade **weekly** religious education classes are on Monday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:00 PM. 7th and 8th grade weekly religious education classes are on Monday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Attendance at the Sunday 9:00 a.m. Family Mass is encouraged, but you may attend the Mass of your choice. Families are responsible to make up missed chapters due to absence, also completing the scheduled chapter (if sent home) following an unscheduled cancellation (example: Snow Day).

Sunday Sessions: Pre-K through 6th grade **bi-weekly** religious education classes are on Sunday mornings from 10:00 to 11:40 AM. On the **off**+weeks parents will work with their child/children on lessons at home. Attendance at the Sunday 9:00 AM Family Mass is encouraged, but you may attend the Mass of your choice. Families are responsible to make up missed chapters due to absence. Children attending on Sunday should follow the calendar provided for class meetings and homework (AT HOME = homework) also completing the scheduled chapter if they are absent from class or there is an unscheduled cancellation (example: Snow Day).

Family Catechesis: Parents and their children in Pre-K through 8th grades gather monthly for religious education classes on Sunday evenings from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. On the **off**+weeks parents will work with their child/children on lessons at home. Attendance at the Sunday 9:00 AM Family Mass is encouraged, but you may attend the Mass of your choice.

Family Catechesis (continued):

Liturgical work resource: For all parents and students, the Sunday Readings & Background, Question of the Week, Activity of the Week and Saint of the Week can be found at: <http://lifelongcatechesis.osv.com>.

HOMEWORK: Please return all assigned homework in the family folder provided. For chapter assignments, please hand in only the review page (not the entire chapter). For unit reviews, hand in only the test pages. Every family must also hand in the appropriate weekly Liturgical work.

Since there are only EIGHT dates on the calendar, your attendance is required and expected as scheduled except for extreme unavoidable circumstances. Thank you.

Special Needs: Our programs provide an inclusive education for all children with special needs. Placement is done at the discretion of the program leaders and cooperation of the parents. Please inform us of your child's learning needs, allergies, and any factors that may assist us in the education and care of your child. Spaces are provided on the registration form for this information.

Remedial Programs: Children, who enter our programs with gaps or have extended periods of time without formal religious education, may require special sessions or home study. Parents are also asked to bring special sacramental needs to the attention of the program leaders at registration time before classes begin.

Health Information: Parents are requested to list and explain, on the registration form, all of the health issues of the child. If a new health issue occurs during the school year, parents should write a note to the Program Leader and to the child's teacher. If your child requires the use of an **Inhaler** or **EpiPen** please contact the Program Leader to obtain and file the proper medical form.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The Sacramental Preparation Program for Reconciliation, Eucharist (Communion) and Confirmation is coordinated through the Religious Education Office. Religious Education students, as well as parish children attending Catholic schools, prepare together for these sacraments. Each sacramental preparation program includes a mandatory parent meeting and/or retreat, which must be attended by at least one parent, where specifics for the particular sacramental preparation will be addressed.

CURRICULUM

Pre-K and Kindergarten: Lectionary-based weekly lessons using the Pflaum *Gospel Weeklies* series.

1st and 3rd through 8th grade: *Alive in Christ* series (Our Sunday Visitor): Provides students with content-centered, liturgical, Lectionary-connected catechesis. *Alive in Christ* uses a proven three-step catechetical process: Invite, Discover and Live. This series covers seven themes (Revelation, Trinity, Jesus Christ, The Church, Morality, Sacraments, and Kingdom of God) of our Catholic Faith in a spiraling curriculum to provide dynamic faith formation in an age appropriate manner. Student books have 21 lessons with stories, Scripture activities, prayers and additional seasonal lessons and celebrations. Each lesson includes a Family+Faith page to help families participate in their children's faith formation.

2nd grade: *Encounter with Christ* Reconciliation and Eucharist books (Our Sunday Visitor): a sacrament preparation program that builds on and complements the concepts presented in *Alive in Christ*.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Please use caution when driving in and through the parking lot. Use only the designated spaces for parking while you are dropping off or picking up children. Please do not stop in the driving lanes of the lot.

Procedures for Pre-K through 6th Grades: Students in Pre-K through Grade 6 enter the Trinity Academy school building through the main gym doors located near the parking lot directly behind the church. Students then gather in the gym with their assigned class (ex. 3a-grade 3, section a).

The children's safety is of great concern. For this reason, upon entering the gym children are asked to sit on the gym floor with their assigned class. After the opening welcome and announcements, children, accompanied by their catechist or aide, will go to their classrooms, class by class, in an orderly fashion.

The Pre-K through 3rd grade students will be dismissed at the end of class through the side door by the Kelley Residence. The 4th through 6th grade students will be dismissed through the back doors of the school facing the back parking lot. From there the students are to be met by their parent, guardian, designated carpool adult, etc. and should not be left to wander or cross the parking lot alone during these busy times.

Procedure for 7th and 8th grade: Students in Grades 7 and 8 enter the Trinity Academy school building through the back door near the parking lot. Students then report to the cafeteria on the lower level of the school and sit at the assigned tables for their class for the evening introduction and prayer before class.

Students will be dismissed at the end of class through the same door near the parking lot. Parents' cars should be parked in marked spaces and not lined up for pick-up by the door. To ease pick-up congestion, 7th grade will be dismissed at 8:25 PM and 8th grade will be dismissed at 8:30 PM.

Procedure for Family Catechesis: Families enter the Trinity Academy school building through the back door near the parking lot and proceed to the cafeteria on the lower level of the school and sit at the tables. Families (parent and child together) gather again for closing prayer and announcements in the cafeteria and will exit at the end of class through the same door near the parking lot, in time to attend the 7:00 PM Mass if desired.

NOTE: For the safety and security of all students, all doors will be locked 15 minutes after the beginning of classes. Students arriving beyond this timeframe must report to the Religious Education Office to obtain a late pass before going to class. Ring doorbell at the back doors of the school for entry (if available) or call 973-226-0209 x42.

ATTENDANCE

Faith Formation is an ongoing process. Continuous participation in the Religious Education Program from grade one through eight is required. Children are expected to attend all sessions. When a child is absent, he/she misses the activities and instruction planned by the catechist, as well as the interaction with classmates. A student cannot benefit from the program if attendance is inconsistent.

Parents or guardians should contact the Religious Education office in advance to report an absence. Sometimes absences cannot be avoided. The student is expected to complete all work that has been missed. In this way, absences will be less disruptive to the formation process. Excessive absences and/or missing work may prohibit a student from moving on to the next grade.

Early dismissal is discouraged. If necessary, however, the request for early dismissal of a student must be given in writing by the parent or guardian. A child will only be released to the person indicated on the note. When a child is dismissed before class has ended the parent/guardian must come to the office to sign out their child. Students may not be dismissed from the classroom, nor are they to wait outdoors for their ride. We ask for your cooperation with this so that we can better protect our students.

WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS

If the C/WC Public Schools are closed or dismissed early due to inclement weather on Monday, Religious Education classes are automatically cancelled. For Sundays, in the case of inclement weather, class cancellation message will be posted on the Religious Education line (973-226-0209 x31), and on the parish website: www.stalscaldwell.org.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

The faith formation of your child is a task that cannot be accomplished alone. The home and family structure is the first and primary place in which a child experiences God's love, care and forgiveness. It is vital to his/her faith development that the parents pray daily with their children and worship weekly with them at Mass, enabling them to participate in the Eucharist and thereby being a living example and role model. In so doing, you pass on the traditions and practices of our Catholic faith to your children. In partnership with you, we hope to teach your children what it means to be a Catholic Christian. We are here to assist and encourage you in your God-given responsibilities. Your involvement, support and cooperation is essential to the success of this partnership.

- ◆ Communication between families and the Religious Education Office is essential. Parents will be kept informed of important dates and information through letters, email, phone calls, and through the weekly church bulletin. The church bulletin is a very important vehicle of communication which may also be viewed online on the church website.
- ◆ Families are expected to be active in the parish and support it in the spirit of stewardship, sharing their time, talents, and treasures.
- ◆ Ensure that children attend Mass and class regularly and retreats, practices, etc. during sacramental preparation years.
- ◆ Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect a child within the classroom.
- ◆ Be an active part of your child's learning through involvement in the program, and reviewing and completing materials sent home.
- ◆ Call to report an absence from class, retreats or required practices.
- ◆ We ask that children do not bring food or beverages into the gym or classrooms. Please remember that we are required to abide by the rules and regulations in the use of the school building.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Saint Aloysius Religious Education Program is a Catholic Christian Community. As a member of this community every student has certain privileges and obligations. In order to protect these rights and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, it is necessary to develop guidelines which all students are expected to follow. Violations of program regulations and guidelines, which infringe on the rights and privileges of others, cannot be tolerated. Specific guidelines must be followed so that each child may develop into a responsible Christian.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

In School: Students are to treat the teachers, staff, and one another with Christian charity and respect at all times.

- ◆ The school building (classrooms, bulletin boards, desk contents, etc.) and the property of others should be respected and not disturbed.
- ◆ No eating, drinking, or chewing gum is permitted in the gym or classrooms without specific permission from the adult in charge.
- ◆ All cell phones/electronic devices are to be turned off and put away during class time. Any cell phone/electronic device found to be in use during class will be confiscated by the teacher or Program Leader and held until the end of class.

In Church:

- ◆ Students are expected to enter quietly, in reverence for Our Lord's Presence in the Tabernacle and in consideration for those praying.
- ◆ Upon entering students should bless themselves (make the sign of the cross) with holy water (a reminder of their baptism) and genuflect on the right knee looking at the Tabernacle (where Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament) before entering their pew.
- ◆ While in church students are expected to maintain a reverent attitude. **There should be no chatting, eating, drinking, gum chewing or cell phone use.**

DISCIPLINE

Our Catechists are volunteers who are giving their time and effort for the benefit of the students. They have limited time in which to teach their lessons. They are not expected to deal with students who do not plan to cooperate. It is not fair to them or the rest of the class.

Disruptive students will be excused from class and sent to the Religious Education Office to speak with the Program Leader. Students will return to their classroom prior to the end of class to be dismissed with the class as usual (so there is no confusion as to what door they go out etcõ).

Three Strikes and You're Home-Schooled Policy:

Strike One is the first time a student is excused from class due to disruptive behavior. The Program Leader will speak to him/her and send the student back to class before dismissal.

Strike Two is the second time that same student is excused from the classroom. A letter will go home advising the parent/guardian that this is the second time their child has had to be excused from class because of disruptive behavior, the letter must be signed by a parent and the student in order for him/her to be admitted into class again.

Third Strike is the third and final time the same student would be excused for disruptive behavior. Since it would seem the classroom program does not best meet the needs of the particular student we will ask the parents to do Home Study for the remainder of the current school year.

Discipline problems are to be understood as disrespectful behavior, use of vulgar language, disruptive actions and disregard for classroom rules. Our catechists are able to deal with normal restlessness or lack of attentiveness that can occur in any classroom situation.

PARENT/CATECHIST COMMUNICATION

Parents should always feel free to speak with the catechist about their child's progress, or any concerns that may arise. The Program Leader is also available to discuss matters with parents.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT

Due to Archdiocesan policy, a child's custodial parent(s) or guardian must give written consent to register a child in the Parish Religious Education program (signature on the registration form). The custodial parent/guardian's signature on the enclosed Parent Acceptance form will also signify that the signee has read, understands, and supports the policies contained in the Family Handbook. Parents are asked to please review the Handbook contents with their child.

PROGRESS REPORTS

In order to keep parents/guardians informed of their child's participation in religious education classes Progress Reports may be provided during and/or at the end of the year. Parents are asked to review these reports with their children. Permanent record cards are kept in the Religious Education Office indefinitely. A record is kept of the child's class attendance, religious education history, and sacramental history.

RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

Both parents have the right of access to a child's religious education progress reports and achievement information unless one parent produces a legal (court certified) document to the contrary. The Religious Education Program will supply a progress report copy to the non-custodial parent/guardian upon request, which must be in writing. Changes in the normal routine must be approved by the custodial parent/guardian.

SAFETY

The well-being of our children is very important and should be a concern of our entire parish community. Listed below are three areas that stand out as safety priorities in our program.

Background Screening & Protecting God's Children: All adult volunteers who work with our children are required to have background screening and attend a Protecting God's Children workshop. Parents are welcome and encouraged to also attend a PGC workshop, go to www.virtusonline.org (click on **Registration** on the left side) to sign-up for a location and date that is convenient for you.

Parking Lot Safety: The parking lots and access lanes to the buildings on our property are very busy and congested at times. With many large vehicles, students may be blocked from view when exiting the building. To parents and driving adults, we ask that you drive and park cautiously and courteously and only in designated areas. Please **DO NOT** drive in the area between the white trailer and side of school building, and do not line up running cars to pick-up students as they exit building.

Building Safety: For the safety of all and to provide security, all doors will be locked 15 minutes after the beginning of classes. Knowledge of exits and direction to follow in case of fire or emergency situations are made known to staff and students.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

Individuals and families are considered members of the parish if they are formally *registered*, are *active* and *contributing* to the mission and needs of our parish community. **Registered** means that we have an updated record of the individual's or family's membership in the parish. To register, simply fill out a registration form available from the parish office. **Active** means that the individual or family attends Mass weekly and on holy days, and participates in other parish activities according to need, desire, interest and availability. **Contributing** means that the individual or family supports the parish financially (Faith Direct/envelopes), and/or offers their time and talents to the parish in service to its needs.

Individuals and families who are not registered, active and contributing will find it difficult to obtain some parish services, such as a letter of eligibility if asked to be a Godparent at Baptism or sponsor for Confirmation.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, OR E-MAIL

It is important that our records be kept up-to-date. Therefore, please notify the Religious Education Office in writing of any change of address, phone number, emergency number or email address. Communication to parents via email will increase.

STEWARDSHIP

As Baptized Christians, we are all responsible for supporting the Church with our *time, talent, and treasure*. We encourage families and children to become involved and active in our parish, as well as the wider community. Parental volunteer participation is welcomed and needed in various areas of the Religious Education program. Anyone interested in volunteering for this service can call the Religious Education Office.

MASS and CHILDREN'S LITURGY of the WORD

Regular attendance at Sunday Mass cannot be stressed enough. We strongly encourage everyone to attend Mass on the days required by the Church (i.e. All Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation), and remind all parents and students of this honor and obligation. Participation in the Mass every Sunday and on all Holy Days is not only a requirement of Catholic Church law, but is also the most effective means of growing in faith and deepening our relationship with God, Who comes to us, fully present, in the Eucharist. Liturgy is the primary source of catechesis in our Catholic Faith. In order to truly live and understand what is taught in the classroom, we must also attend Mass, where we worship God and allow Him to nourish us as the Bread of Life. Of course, families are welcome to attend whichever Mass they prefer. However, we do encourage you to attend the Sunday 9:00 AM Family Mass.

Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW) takes place within the 9:00 AM Mass on designated Sundays throughout the year. At that Mass, children are led to the school building just before the First Reading and return to their parents usually before the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward by the children. During this time, the children are celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with our catechists and their peers, listening to the Scriptures and a reflection adapted to their level of understanding and attention span.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

The catechumenate is a process for adults desiring Baptism for Christians of other denominations wishing to enter the Catholic Church and for adult Catholics who wish to complete their Christian initiation with First Eucharist, and/or Confirmation. For more information contact Sister Alice Uhl at 973-226-0209 x30 or by email at auhl@stalscaldwell.org.

AREAS OF PARISH INVOLVEMENT FOR YOUTH:

Altar Servers: All students in grades 4 through 12 are invited to join our team by the Altar of the Lord. Altar Servers are an important part of the majesty and grandeur of all our Masses. If you have any questions, please call Father Juan Jose at 973-226-0221.

Children's Choir: Children from the 3rd to 8th grade are invited to sing in St. Al's Children's Choir. The choir generally sings twice a month from September to May. The choir also sings at the Christmas Pageant, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Rehearsals are held Thursdays in the church choir loft from 4:00-4:45 PM. For further information please contact Joe Wozniak at 973-226-0221.

Youth Aides: Students in 7th through 12th grade may volunteer to assist in the classroom, office, CLOW, sacramental retreats, and Vacation Bible Camp.

Youth Group: All 8th through 12th graders are invited to join the parish Youth Group which meets most Sunday evenings from 8:00 to 9:00 PM in the lower level of the Parish Center. Please see the bulletin for a current Youth Group schedule.

Youth Group Music Ministry: All teen singers and musicians are invited to participate in the 7:00 PM Mass on Sunday evenings. Please meet in the choir loft of the church at 6:50 PM.

Christmas Eve Pageant: Immediately before the 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Mass, children tell the story of the birth of Jesus through narration, song and their procession and presence in front of the altar dressed for their assigned parts.

Palm Sunday Family Mass: All families are invited to attend and participate at this special celebration of Palm Sunday at the 9:00 AM Mass each year. The children are encouraged to take part as singers, lectors/readers, ushers, altar servers, palm carriers in procession, gift bearers, set-up/clean-up, etc. Families are encouraged to come with children of any age and extended family members are invited too. A great way to involve the whole family, and to begin your Holy Week with a memorable and spirit-filled experience. Hosanna in the Highest!

Living Stations of the Cross: All families are invited to attend this annual Good Friday presentation at 7:30 PM in the church. Members of the Youth Group and other interested teens commemorate Jesus' journey to the Cross in word, action and song. Information about rehearsals appears in the church bulletin.

Vacation Bible Camp: During this week-long (half-day) summer program, pre-school to 6th grade children will enjoy an exciting faith-filled, God-centered Catholic VBC experience. Every day is packed with fun activities designed to help kids experience the importance of faith sharing.

A Prayer for Family Commitment

Dear God our Father, you have called all Christian families to be a sign of your love to the world.

Help us to be generous with the gifts of life and love that you have showered on our family. May we share them so that our homes become true signs of unitive and fruitful love.

Let us never forget to thank you each day for all that sustains us and to look to Christ, who comes to us in the events of family life, in the sacraments of the Church, and in service to the poor.

In all of this, our family becomes a living expression of your Church, a hallowed home of life and love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may all of us - spouses, parents, and children - share, as members of his Body, in Jesus' mission to build a civilization of love.

Father, we ask this in Jesus' name in union with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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