

SAINT ALPHONSUS PARISH  
SACRAMENT HANDBOOK FOR CELEBRATION OF  
FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST EUCHARIST



Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome! You and your child are entering a special time of preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation--the celebration of God's love and mercy. Because your child learns through your example, you, as parents, are very important to the process of preparation. Your home is where faith is developed and lived.

Our parish is happy to help you bring your child to this encounter with Jesus. This handbook provides general information, key ideas, and resource suggestions to assist you in your role as a Catholic parent. Please take the time to review the material. We are ready to help you. Do not hesitate to call on us with questions or concerns. May God bless you and your family.

Monsignor Brian Hennessy  
Pastor

Mrs. Michele Gordon  
DRE



## GENERAL INFORMATION:

- ❖ Children must be in at least second grade and have had two consecutive years of religious education.
- ❖ All candidates must provide a baptismal certificate. You will be notified if this information is missing.
- ❖ **First Penance Attire:** Sunday best for girls and boys. No sneakers, please.

### ❖ **First Communion Attire:**

*Girls:* White dress, tea length style or at the knee. Veil is optional. No casual footwear.

*Boys:* Suit or sports jacket with slacks. Dress shirt and tie. Good shoes.

- ❖ **Pictures/Video:** Information regarding professional photos will be sent out when available.
- ❖ **Materials Fee:** A fee of \$80 is required to cover the cost of both sacraments. Most Prep families paid this at registration. OLM families will be contacted for payment..

## REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

**In order to successfully complete the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, parents and children are required to attend all meetings, retreats, and practices. Dates and details for these will be sent out via email to parents.**



## **PARENT'S CHECKLIST FOR RECONCILIATION**

1. \_\_\_\_ Your child is attending Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation with you or a guardian.
  
2. \_\_\_\_ Your child participates in religion class and is assisted by you in the study and preparation for reception of the sacrament.
  
3. \_\_\_\_ Your child knows the basic prayers appropriate for this level: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Grace before and after meals, and the Act of Contrition.
  
4. \_\_\_\_ Your child knows the format for the Sacrament of Penance.
  
5. \_\_\_\_ You have taken your child to the confessional and they have explored the confessional area.
  
6. \_\_\_\_ You have taken your child with you when you go to confession (seated at a distance) so they see you go and have an understanding of the value and importance of this sacrament in your life so they can make the connection with it in their life.

**The following is an examination of conscience you may use to teach your children and the form and Act of Contrition we will use.**

## **CHILDREN'S EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

It is recommended that you spend some time each night to reflect and pray on these questions:

- When I make choices, do I think first about what God wants me to do?
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays without a good reason?
- Have I used the name of God or Jesus in respectful ways?
- Have I obeyed the grown-ups who take care of me?
- Have I fought with my brothers, sisters or friends?
- Have I been a good friend to others?
- Have I always told the truth?
- Have I taken anything which did not belong to me?
- Have I used other people's things with care?

To be memorized:

## **RITE OF RECONCILIATION**

**PRIEST:** Greets the Penitent: "Peace be with you"

**PENITENT:** Answers: "And with your spirit."

**PENITENT:** Begins with the Sign of the Cross - saying: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, this is my first confession and these are my sins ."

Penitent states his or her sins (An estimation of frequency is helpful!)

The penitent ends the confession of sins by saying:  
"for these and all the sins of my past life, I am heartily sorry"

**PRIEST:** Gives some encouraging words and assigns a penance.

**PENITENT:** Recites : Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended  
You, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just

punishments. But most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.  
Amen.

PRIEST: Says the Form of Absolution.

PENITENT: The Priest ends the prayer of absolution by saying: "Therefore I absolve you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", the penitent makes the Sign of the Cross and responds: "Amen"

PRIEST: Then says: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good!"

PENITENT: Responds: "For His mercy endures forever!" and thanks the Priest.

## **The Beauty of Mercy: Pope Francis and Confession**

### *God Never Tires of Forgiving Us*

Since he was elected Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis has continually emphasized the infinite mercy of a God who never tires of reaching out. Throughout his teachings, the Holy Father has put forth the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a gift that permits each one of us to encounter the mercy of God in a personal and profound way.

“Among the Sacraments, certainly Reconciliation renders present with particular efficacy the merciful face of God: it is constantly and ceaselessly made real and manifest,” Pope Francis says with the force of personal experience and conviction. (Internal Forum organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary March 2015.)

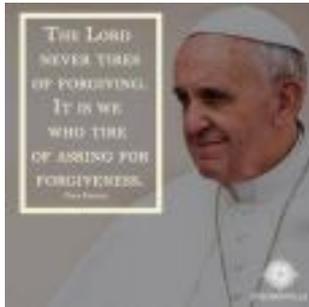
“The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a Sacrament of healing. When I go to confession, it is in order to be healed, to heal my soul, to heal my heart and to be healed of some wrongdoing,” describes Pope Francis. (General Audience Feb. 2014)

“The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation flows directly from the Paschal Mystery. In fact, on the evening of Easter the Lord appeared to the disciples, who were locked in the Upper Room, and after addressing

them with the greeting, ‘Peace be with you!’, he breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven’ (Jn 20:21-23). This passage reveals to us the most profound dynamic contained in this Sacrament.”

Like the merciful father in the parable of the prodigal son, God is eager to forgive, adds Pope Francis: “Each time we go to confession, God embraces us. God rejoices!” (General Audience Feb. 2014).

Finding God’s Forgiveness through the Church The Holy Father stresses that forgiveness of our sins is not something that we can give ourselves. In confession, we ask forgiveness from Jesus. “Forgiveness is not the fruit of our own efforts but rather a gift, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit who fills us with the wellspring of mercy and of grace that flows unceasingly from the open heart of the Crucified and Risen Christ.” (General Audience Feb. 2014).



## **Parent's Checklist for Eucharist**

\_\_\_\_ 1. Your child knows the importance of attending Mass and takes an active role in participating at Mass by responding to the prayers and singing at Mass.

\_\_\_\_ 2. Your child is assisted with study and preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

\_\_\_\_ 3. Your child knows the basic prayers and responses at Mass.

\_\_\_\_ 4. Your child knows about and shows reverence for prayer and worship and is quiet while in church.

\_\_\_\_ 5. Your child knows the format for the Sacrament of the Eucharist i.e. The procedures and the options for the reception of the Host during the Communion Rite of the Mass.

### **Pope Francis on the Eucharist: General Audience 2/5/14**

The Eucharist is at the heart of “Christian initiation”, together with Baptism and Confirmation, and it constitutes the source of the Church’s life itself. From this Sacrament of love, in fact, flows every authentic journey of faith, of communion and of witness.

What we see when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, the Mass, already gives us an intuition of what we are about to live. At the centre of the space intended for the celebration there is an altar, which is a table covered with a tablecloth, and this makes us think of a banquet. On the table there is a cross to indicate that on this altar what is offered is the sacrifice of Christ: he is the spiritual food that we receive there, under the species of bread and wine. Beside the table is the ambo, the place from which the Word of God is proclaimed: and this indicates that there we gather to listen to the Lord who speaks through Sacred Scripture, and therefore the food that we receive is also his Word.

Word and Bread in the Mass become one, as at the Last Supper, when all the words of Jesus, all the signs that he had performed, were condensed into the gesture of breaking the bread and offering the chalice, in

anticipation of the sacrifice of the cross, and in these words: “Take, eat; this is my body... Take, drink of it; for this is my blood”.

Jesus’ gesture at the Last Supper is the ultimate thanksgiving to the Father for his love, for his mercy. “Thanksgiving” in Greek is expressed as “eucharist”. And that is why the Sacrament is called the Eucharist: it is the supreme thanksgiving to the Father, who so loved us that he gave us his Son out of love. This is why the term Eucharist includes the whole of that act, which is the act of God and man together, the act of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Therefore the Eucharistic Celebration is much more than simple banquet: it is exactly the memorial of Jesus’ Paschal Sacrifice, the mystery at the centre of salvation. “Memorial” does not simply mean a remembrance, a mere memory; it means that every time we celebrate this Sacrament we participate in the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The Eucharist is the summit of God’s saving action: the Lord Jesus, by becoming bread broken for us, pours upon us all of his mercy and his love, so as to renew our hearts, our lives and our way of relating with him and with the brethren. It is for this reason that commonly, when we approach this Sacrament, we speak of “receiving Communion”, of “taking Communion”: this means that by the power of the Holy Spirit, participation in Holy Communion conforms us in a singular and profound way to Christ, giving us a foretaste already now of the full communion with the Father that characterizes the heavenly banquet, where together with all the Saints we will have the joy of contemplating God face to face.

Dear friends, we don’t ever thank Lord enough for the gift he has given us in the Eucharist! It is a very great gift and that is why it is so important to go to Mass on Sunday. Go to Mass not just to pray, but to receive Communion, the bread that is the Body of Jesus Christ who saves us, forgives us, unites us to the Father. It is a beautiful thing to do! And we go to Mass every Sunday because that is the day of the resurrection of the Lord. That is why Sunday is so important to us. And in this Eucharist we feel this belonging to the Church, to the People of God, to the Body of God, to Jesus Christ. We will never completely grasp the value and the richness of it. Let us ask him then that this Sacrament continue to keep his presence alive in the Church and to shape our community in charity and communion, according to the Father's heart. This is done throughout life, but is begun on the day of our First Communion. It is important that children be prepared well for their First Communion and

that every child receive it, because it is the first step of this intense belonging to Jesus Christ, after Baptism and Confirmation.

### **First Eucharist Celebration Mass:**

If you have a priest in the family who would like to be included in the First Eucharist Celebration Mass, please have him contact Monsignor Hennessy at 215-646-4600.

If you have a child who is an altar server and you would like to include them for consideration in the First Eucharist Celebration Mass, please let Michele Gordon know at 215-643-7938, or [mgordon@stalphonsusparish.org](mailto:mgordon@stalphonsusparish.org).