

St. Aloysius Church

Sacramental Preparation



First
Reconciliation
And
First Eucharist

Sacrament Preparation Booklet

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

Parents are the primary educators of their children in all things. This is especially true in matters of faith. In celebrating the Rite of Baptism of Infants: you committed yourselves to form your children in the life of faith. At that time, the priest or deacon said to you; *“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us; by loving God and neighbor.”*

As parents, you have the right and duty to be intimately involved in the preparation of your child for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. We are here to assist you in this most important responsibility but we can never take over the primary role of parents. Our Sacrament preparation process is designed to give you - the parent - a greater understanding of your responsibility and commitment to the Catholic Christian education of your child.

The greatest gift we can give our children is a fervent love of God!

“Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Dear Parents,

This is a year of great blessings for your family!

In the weeks and months ahead you will be preparing your child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to receive the Eucharist for the first time. Your child will experience the loving forgiveness and friendship of Jesus. In the Eucharist, your child will receive the very Body and Blood of Christ and will enter into loving communion with Him.

As parents, you are co-creators with God and therefore have the right and privilege to be the primary educators of your children in the Faith. This most precious gift of Faith is what was asked of you when you presented your child for Baptism. Now, it is especially important that you share in this preparation.

This handbook will assist you, providing information and helpful tips in your role as a Catholic parent.

It is my sincere hope that your children will come to a deeper knowledge of the love of God through the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. It is through the sacraments that Jesus touches us in a most unique and personal way.

God bless your families as you prepare for this milestone along your child's faith journey. Your child's catechist, the clergy, and the religious education staff are here to assist you every step of the way.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Rob Kinnally
Pastor

A few thoughts for parents:

- Sacraments are always community celebrations; your **ongoing** connection with our faith community is important. Your child will have a sense of being part of our faith community by your weekly attendance at Mass. This is vitally important.
 - The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) is a celebration of God's ever-present forgiveness that is always available to us. Through the grace of the Sacrament we are strengthened to live faithful lives in light of being both a forgiven and a forgiving people. The most important way to prepare for the Sacrament is to model forgiveness in our families.
 - Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of Initiation and is **the core of Catholic life**, the source of our communion with Christ and one another. It is an act of thanksgiving (the word "Eucharist") means this. We are thankful for ... EVERYTHING – beginning with our existence. Eucharist is the food that sustains us on our journey through the material world.
 - Talk to your children and remind them that the Eucharist unites them with the entire Body of Christ – the bigger family that they belong to. Each Sunday millions of believers are brought together, strengthened and fed by Jesus through Eucharist. WE NEED THIS - often - in order to go into the world and be Jesus to everyone we encounter.
 - Continue to bring your children to religious education classes and participate in our sacramental programs (dates are included in this booklet). This way your child will be prepared and confident in receiving the sacraments.
- * Contact the Marie Osterndorf at the religious education office at 203-652-1173 with any questions or concerns.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION and PENANCE)

You began preparing your child for Reconciliation long ago. Every time your child has seen or experienced loving forgiveness in your home, he or she has understood a little more about God's forgiving love. With the assistance of your child's catechists he/she will begin direct preparation for this Sacrament.

Suggestions for Parents:

- ❖ Take time with your child to read the parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31).
- ❖ Teach your child that to sin is to act against God's will. Make sure your child understands the differences between a mistake, accident, temptation and sin by talking about some typical situations, which illustrate these occurrences.
- ❖ Discuss this sacrament with your child. Remember to do more listening than talking. Your child may express feelings or concerns to you at home that may not have been mentioned in class.
- ❖ Take your child on a "field trip" and visit the confessional in the chapel in the back of the church, at a time when confessions aren't being heard.
- ❖ Role-play "going to Confession" (*don't use real sins when role playing; make up some false sins*).
- ❖ Help your child learn the Act of Contrition by simply saying it together once a day before dinner or at bedtime. Also review with your child a short examination of conscience.
- ❖ Bring your child each week to Religious Education classes so that he/she will receive the full benefit of direct preparation for the Sacrament.
- ❖ Attend all of the parent/child programs presented by St. Aloysius Religious Education.
- ❖ Above all, remember that this will be the first time your child will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is the first step in a lifetime during which your child's appreciation of the sacrament will grow and deepen.

Please keep in mind that after First Reconciliation it is your responsibility to make sure that your child is provided the opportunity to go to Confession on a regular basis. Religious Education students will have the opportunity to go to Confession with their class during Advent and Lent.

THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST RECONCILIATION
WILL BE CELEBRATED ON
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2018

8:30 am – 11:00 am
St. Aloysius Church

Please mark your calendar and note that each class will be assigned a time to arrive.

Times will be staggered to minimize wait time.

You will be notified via e-mail of your child's assigned time.

FAMILY RECONCILIATION DAY

Saturday, January 5, 2019

9:00 am - 10:30 am

St. Aloysius Chapel

A wonderful opportunity to come to this Sacrament as a family.
Please contact Marie Osterndorf at the Religious Education Office
at 203-652-1173 or Confirmation@starcc.com to schedule a time.

CHILDREN'S EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

We use an examination of conscience to help call to mind our sins and failings during a period of quiet reflection before approaching the priest in Confession at Reconciliation.

- Do I love God as His very own child?
- Do I remember to pray to Him every day?
- Do I thank Him for all He does for me?
- Do I always say God's name with love?
- Do I always say the name of Jesus with love?
- Do I show my love for God by loving others?
- Do I keep Sunday holy by going to Mass?
- Did I pay attention at Mass?
- Do I remind myself that I am in God's house and do I behave as I should?
- Do I always talk nicely to my parents?
- Do I always say "Thank You" to people?
- Do I do what my parents ask me to do?
- Do I help with chores around the house?
- Do I try to be pleasant while doing chores and obeying my parents?
- Do I show my love for others by obeying rules at school and other public places?
- Do I treat others with love and kindness?
- Do I ever hurt others by calling them names?
- Do I fight with others?
- Do I make others angry?
- Have I blamed other people for things I do?
- Did I get other people into trouble?
- Have I forgiven people? Or am I holding a grudge?
- Do I always tell the truth?
- Do I make promises that I do not keep?
- Do I ever cheat on tests or schoolwork?
- Have I cheated or been unfair in games?
- How many times did I lie to my parents? My teachers? My friends?
- Did I take anything that did not belong to me?
- Do I refuse to share my things with others?
- Do I treat the property of others with respect and care?

HOW TO CONFESS YOUR SINS

Enter the confessional and sit down across from the priest and say **“Hello.”**

Make the sign of the Cross and say **“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession. These are my sins:”** (*Confess or tell your sins to the priest*)

Listen to the priest. He will give you some advice on how to be a better Catholic and open your heart to God and be the person He wants you to be.

The priest will give you a penance – it may be a prayer or some kind of action that will help you to be more thoughtful about areas of sinfulness and failing.

The priest will invite you to tell God that you are sorry for your sins by saying the Act of Contrition:

“My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God have mercy. Amen.”

The priest will give you absolution and offer you God’s forgiveness.

Bless yourself with the sign of the cross *as the priest says: “I forgive you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

You respond: **“Amen.”**

Say **“Thank You”** to the priest and **leave the confessional, if necessary go to the altar to say your penance** before leaving the church and feeling uplifted and energized by God’s mercy and love!

THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION (EUCHARIST)

Parents have a right and duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Holy Communion. Catechesis aims to help parents grow in their understanding, love, and appreciation of the Eucharist in order to catechize their children. As a parent, you have the **primary role** in the Sacramental preparation for your child. You will help your child grow in faith as you prepare him/her for the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. ***Your attendance at weekly Sunday Mass and required events is vital!*** Your interest, example, witness and prayers make a difference in your child's decision to receive the Sacrament with an open heart as they continue to grow in the Faith.

With this in mind, we remind you that the role of a religious education program can only be secondary to you, the parent. We encourage you to do all you can, and we promise to do the best we can to aid and guide the sacramental preparation for your child.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

The celebration of the Mass is the center of the whole Catholic life. All other liturgical rites and all the works of the Catholic Christian life are linked to the Eucharistic celebration, flow from it, and have it as their end.

- * When you attend Mass every Sunday, help your child to fully participate in the Mass.
- * Take your child to Church to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Explain how Jesus is waiting in the Tabernacle for us to come to Him, how He loves us to come and just be with Him.
- * Attend a weekday Mass with your child, often they are less crowded and shorter in duration. Sit near the front so your child can see what is happening.
- * Read the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper as well as John chapter 6 with your child.
- * Be a role model for your child. Remember that the reverence with which you accept Jesus in the Eucharist will be the example that will be followed by your child.
- * Discuss and practice appropriate Church behavior with your child while showing him/her your own love of the Lord. *Practice the Sign of the Cross, Prayers, Genuflecting, etc.*

IMPORTANT DATES for FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

We appreciate your calendaring these dates early on so that you can attend.

DATES FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Sunday, April 28, 2019 11:30 am Mass

Monday April 22 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Tuesday April 23 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Wednesday April 24 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Tuesday and Wednesday Classes

child rehearsal
child rehearsal
parent and child rehearsal

Children must attend all the rehearsals. Parents must attend the Wednesday rehearsal only.

All rehearsals are in the Church.

Sunday, May 5, 2019 11:30 am Mass

Monday April 29 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Tuesday April 30 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Wednesday May 1 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Sunday and Monday Classes

child rehearsal
child rehearsal
parent and child rehearsal

Children must attend all the rehearsals. Parents must attend the Wednesday rehearsal only.

All rehearsals are in the Church.

Q. How do I know when my child is ready for First Eucharist?

A. Church law presumes that children are ready when they:

- Have a desire to celebrate the sacrament,
- Understand that when the bread and wine are brought to the altar and consecrated, they are no longer ordinary bread and wine, but have become Jesus' Body and Blood for us.

The child's readiness for First Holy Communion comes from the experience of participating in the Mass each week with his or her family rather than just attending religious education classes.

Q. How can I explain Eucharist to my child?

A. Children can begin to understand the Eucharist as a gift of love. You can tell them that Jesus loves us so much that He found His special way – the offering and the sharing of the bread and wine of the Eucharist – to be with us all the time.

Often the words “the Body and Blood of Christ” can be confusing – and even alarming to children. However, in the minds of the people of Jesus' time, the words were used to indicate the whole person, just as today we say “body and soul” or “heart and soul” to describe the giving of our whole selves, our entire being. In his Gospel, St. John used the words “Bread of Life” to describe Jesus' giving power for us.

In class, they will come to know the word “transubstantiation.” They will learn that when bread and wine are on the altar, and the priest says the words, “This is My Body”, “This is the chalice of My Blood,” Jesus becomes truly present on the altar in the Eucharist. It is no longer bread and wine.

Q. What shall I tell my child when he or she asks what the host taste like and how to receive it?

A. The children will get the opportunity to find out the answers in religious education classes. During First Communion rehearsal, they will taste unconsecrated hosts and they will practice receiving Holy Communion.

Q. Is it all right to chew the host?

A. Yes, it is. Jesus said, “Take and eat.”

Q. Can my child receive from the cup? Does he or she have to? Is it important to receive from the cup?

A. Your child can drink from the cup. Jesus said, “Take and drink” as well as Take and eat.” The child does not have to drink, however. **YOU HAVE A CHOICE.** It is important, indeed meaningful, to receive from the cup. Jesus shared the cup at the Last Supper as the “new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.” The wine is rich in symbolism. It is a sign of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross for us and a sign of God's covenant with us, a pledge of His love and His promise to save us from our sins. If you decide your child will not drink from the cup, it does not diminish the sacrament. They are fully receiving Jesus: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

(Janet Schaeffler, OP)

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASS Guidelines and Policies

Time:

Parents are asked to bring their child to the St. Aloysius School gymnasium by 11:00 am for the 11:30 am First Holy Communion Mass. After dropping your child off at the gymnasium and once the 10:00 am Mass has concluded, please be seated in the church.

Please note that once the 10:00 am Mass has concluded the religious education staff will start marking the pews reserved for the First Communicants and their parents. Please ask your guests to be patient with us while we set up for the First Holy Communion Mass.

Fasting:

The rule of fasting from food and drink, except water, for 1 hour before receiving Holy Communion is in effect. *Please make sure your child has had breakfast prior to fasting.*

The purpose of fasting is to help focus our attention on the mystery we will celebrate before we even leave our home - much like preparation of the readings begins to focus us. It is a sign of special respect for the Eucharist. If your child requires a gluten free host – please contact the religious education staff as soon as possible.

Dress Code:

Girls: It is recommended that girls wear white or off-white dresses and dress shoes (*no flip flops or sneakers*). Veils, flowers or ribbons for their hair are optional. **NO** gloves are to be worn or flowers carried in hand.

Boys: Boys are asked to wear jackets, dress slacks, shirts, ties and dress shoes (*no sneakers*). Colors are optional, but most boys wear dark jackets, white shirts and light-colored pants. At the final rehearsal, the religious education staff will be collecting \$5.00 per boy, which will cover the cost of a boutonniere that each boy will wear on his jacket lapel at the First Holy Communion Mass.

Seating Policy:

Seating is arranged so that the mother, father and First Communicant only will sit together in a pew. You will share your pew with another First Communicant family. Pew assignments will be announced on the day of the parent/child rehearsal. The first six/seven pews in the four center sections of the church are reserved on First Holy Communion day for each First Communicant and their parents. This arrangement ensures that you and your child will sit as far forward as possible for easy access to and from the Altar.

Due to the structure and configuration of our church we ask siblings, family members and guests to be seated behind the last rows of our First Communicants. This system ensures that First Communicants sit as far forward as possible on this special day ... where they are closer to God in the Tabernacle.

Church Etiquette:

- ❖ **Please be mindful of Jesus' presence in the Tabernacle by maintaining quiet while inside the church. When we enter and leave Church, genuflect or bow toward the Tabernacle, Christ is present for our sake and we acknowledge He is our Lord and God.**
- ❖ **You may not take photographs during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.** There will be time after Mass to take photographs at the Altar, with or without the priest.
- ❖ **Food (including gum) and drink are NOT permitted in the church.**
- ❖ **Pets are NOT permitted in the church (except for service animals).**
- ❖ Please be certain to ***TURN OFF your cell phone*** when entering the church.

We appreciate your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines and policies. *May your child's First Holy Communion be the beginning of a lifetime of Holy Communions with you and others in God's family ... with Jesus alive in your heart!* If you have any special circumstances that you need to alert the religious education staff to – please contact Marie Osterndorf at Religious Education office, at 203-652-1173 or Confirmation@starcc.com.