

The Celebration of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion with Parish Children

Introduction

As Catholics, our unity with Christ is maintained and strengthened through our participation in the sacraments. As we celebrate the sacraments, we remember Jesus' life, death and resurrection. When our children receive Christ's gift of Forgiveness through the sacrament of Reconciliation and the gift of Himself in First Holy Communion, it strengthens our own faith and brings us closer to God and each other.

Preparing our children for these two sacraments is a sacred responsibility shared by the Holy Spirit, parents, clergy and staff of St. Maria Goretti Parish.

Expectations for Parents and Students

First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are two of the most important personal and communal religious events your child will ever experience.

- ◆ At least one parent/guardian should be a practicing, active member of St. Maria Goretti Parish.
- ◆ Parents should provide a copy of the child's Baptismal certificate at registration.
- ◆ Children should be entering second grade or at least 7 years old to begin preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion.
- ◆ Parents should pay the sacramental preparation and materials fee. All children who meet the requirements will be welcomed, regardless of their ability to pay. The fee may be paid in installments.
- ◆ At least one, but preferably both parents are to attend the First Reconciliation Parents' Meeting and the First Communion Parents' Meeting. Meeting dates will be announced at the beginning of the Religious Education year in September.
- ◆ All students are to attend the First Communion retreat and the First Communion rehearsal.

- ◆ In addition to classroom materials, parents are to assist their child with weekly supplementary instruction for both First Reconciliation and First Communion.
- ◆ Children will have celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving First Communion.
- ◆ Children are expected to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation as a group at a special Reconciliation Liturgy in the parish.
- ◆ The celebration of First Communion will take place at a parish Saturday/Sunday weekend Mass. In November, parents will have an opportunity to sign up for a Mass time on a first come basis.
- ◆ **Children in the parish school, Edgewood Campus School, religious education program and home schooled children will be integrated into each celebration. No group will have a private or separate celebration. They will participate in a parish First Communion Mass.**
- ◆ The child and his/her family should attend Sunday Mass each week.
- ◆ The child and his/her family should attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation and participate in Advent and Lenten liturgies.
- ◆ Sacraments are connected to and flow out of the life of the parish, and so the child and his/her family should be involved in the life of the parish through participation in liturgical, educational and social events.
- ◆ The child will develop a habit of saying morning and evening prayers daily.
- ◆ The child must have completed the previous year of formal religious education in a Catholic school, a parish program, or a structured home school program. Children who have not received previous religious instruction will be asked to complete additional instruction as needed to bring them to the level of understanding needed to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Home Schooled Children

The Church recognizes that parents or guardians are the primary educators of their children and that some families may choose to provide formal religious catechesis at home. The parish and the parents should work together to provide catechetical instruction to the child. The same

requirements apply to children who are home schooled as are required for children in parish religious education programs and the parish school.

Homeschooled children fulfill the following requirements in addition to those listed above:

- ◆ Children receiving religious education as part of an overall home school program should follow a text that is currently listed on the conformity list approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- ◆ Home schooled children should be enrolled by October 1st in the parish preparation process for the reception of First Communion. While home schooled children attend class at home, they are expected to participate in all other First Reconciliation and Communion activities which the children from the school and religious education complete.
- ◆ Home schooled children will be asked to participate in parish and family events such as but not limited to: St. Vincent DePaul food drive, Advent Angels, Rice Bowl, and the Military Service project, to foster involvement and connection in the life of the parish.
- ◆ Home schooled children should participate in an organized tour of the church and Sacristy to become familiar with and to promote a better understanding of the Mass and our Church.
- ◆ Home school families meet with the Coordinator of Religious Education to help evaluate progress and to identify areas where additional preparation may be necessary.