



St. Pius X Catholic Community

Sacrament of Reconciliation & First Holy Communion Preparation Packet

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First Reconciliation

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church #1486-1498

To the eyes of faith, there is no evil worse than sin, which wounds God's honor and love. The forgiveness of sins is conferred by the Sacrament of conversion, confession, penance, or reconciliation.

The penitent (the one confessing) performs three actions: repents of sins with contrition (feels sorrow for having done wrong and resolves not to commit those sins again), confesses sins to the priest, and intends to make reparation. The priest performs three actions: offers counsel, proposes a penance (actions or prayers to demonstrate the penitent's repentance), and gives absolution (forgives the sins in the name of the Holy Trinity).

All grave (mortal) sins must be confessed. Lesser (venial) sins do not need to be confessed, but it is recommended to do so anyway.

Sacramental confession has the following effects:

- Restores the penitent to God
- Reconciles the penitent to the Church
- Remits the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins
- At least partially remits the temporal punishment resulting from sin (also occurs through purgatory)
- Provides peace of mind and a clear conscience
- Increases spiritual strength for Christian living

Priests take very seriously the seal of the confessional. Canon law strictly prohibits any priest from discussing anything uttered during sacramental confession, and many priests throughout the world have chosen to be imprisoned or killed rather than violate this sacred seal.

How the Religious Education Ministry helps your child prepare:

In second grade, students discuss Reconciliation in the classroom. We will also be hosting a **Reconciliation Retreat on Saturday, November 18, 2017 at 10:30 am** with 3 aims

1. Allow children from St. Pius X School and RE program to get to know each other and build community.
2. Deepen the children's understanding of Reconciliation by reviewing scenarios in our daily lives in which we can avoid sin, and learning about Zacchaeus through song and story telling.
3. Help children become familiar with confessions by doing mock confessions.

How parents can help prepare at home:

The best way that you can help prepare your child is by talking to them about reconciliation. Share your personal experience. How do you feel after going to confession? It is very common for children to be afraid, so talking to them often about it will help them feel at ease.

Celebration of First Reconciliation

Saturday, December 9, 2017, 10:00 am, St. Pius X Church

Arrival: Please arrive and sign in Shepard's Hall at 9:40 am and plan to be in seated in the pew by 9:50 am. We do not have assigned seating.

Dress Code: Dress for First Reconciliation is dress-casual (no jeans).

Procedure: Ushers will indicate which station your child will go to. Parents/guardians, please present your child to the priest by walking them to the priest. Then step back and allow your child some space to have his/her first confession. Then, following your child, receive reconciliation. When both you and your child have received Reconciliation, light your candle and place it on the altar. Then walk over to the banner and place your child's sheep on the banner. You may now leave or sit prayerfully.

First Holy Communion

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church #1407-1419

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; it is Jesus himself. In this sacrament, we become what we receive: the Body of Christ. At Mass, Jesus acts through the ministry to priest to offer the sacrifice of our salvation. "Transubstantiation" is a theological term that describes the complete change of the substance (what something is in its deepest being) of bread into the substance of Jesus Christ. While the substance changes, the accidents (external features) remain the same—what looks like bread, tastes like bread, and crumbles like bread is actually Jesus. Because of this change in substance, it is proper to offer the Eucharist worship.

The effects of receiving the Eucharist are:

- An increased and deepened union with Jesus
- Forgiveness of venial (lesser) sins
- A strengthening to avoid future mortal (serious) sins
- A reinforced union with all other believers, who are the Church
- A preparation of the body for bodily resurrection

The Church encourages the faithful to receive the Eucharist every time they attend Mass. Strictly speaking, receiving the Eucharist is only "required" at least once a year. Anyone aware of having committed mortal sin must go to sacramental confession before receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. Out of respect and reverence for Jesus in the Eucharist, there are several small ways to prepare for Mass. The Church proscribes a one-hour fast (this includes gum and coffee) before receiving the Eucharist as a way to remind ourselves that we are about to receive the Son of God. Another way to keep in mind the importance of the Eucharist is to wear respectful clothing to church.

How the Religious Education Ministry helps your child prepare:

All students will learn about the Eucharist in the classroom. We will also be hosting a **First Communion retreat** called "**Loaves and Fishes**" on **Saturday, April 14, 2018 at 9 am.**

During this retreat

- students will learn about the multiplication of bread by hearing the story and learning a song
- become familiar with church by visiting the sacristy, vestments, choir loft, confessional, and altar
- practice taking communion
- play a sacrament review game
- create a loaves and fishes mobile

How parents can help prepare at home:

Take some time to talk with your child about the Eucharist. Ask what they are learning in the classroom. Ask what they think about it. Share your own memories of your First Communion. Take your family to Mass every Sunday and talk about it on your drive there and back home. As a family, decide what your prayer intentions will be that Sunday. Review the gospel at home before or after Mass to help the children gain understanding.

*Please use the material provided in the Mass bag to help your child learn about the Mass.

Building Small Communities: Group A (last names A-K) and Group B (last names L-Z)

Children will be placed in small groups (6-8 students) in the First Reconciliation retreat and Loaves and Fishes retreat according to their last name. It is very important for the children to stay in the same groups throughout the year because they will be making friendships with the students in their group. Therefore, any requests to change Mass time for the First Holy Communion must be submitted to the RE office no later than **November, 13, 2017.** We will do our best to accommodate your request, however, keep in mind we must keep the number of students at both Masses even.

First Holy Communion Mass Rehearsal

Group A (A-K) : 5/2/18 in the church at 6:30 PM

Group B (L-Z) : 5/3/18 in the church at 6:30 PM

Families will become familiar with seating arrangement. Father George will help children practice taking communion. Then children participating as liturgy lectors, prayer of the faithful readers, gift bearers, and banner holders will stay after to practice.

First Holy Communion Mass

Group A (A-K) : 5/5/18 in church at 10:00 am (please arrive by 9:30 am)

Group B (L-Z) : 5/5/18 in church at 1:00 pm (please arrive by 12:30 pm)

Walk children to the hallway between the school and church 15 minutes before the Mass begins. There will be two adults lining students up in the correct order for their entrance procession. Then walk back to your seat.

Photography: We will have a professional photographer, therefore, personal photography is not allowed. This decision was made in efforts to avoid distractions and crowds by the altar.

Dress Code for Girls

- White or pastel dress
- Veils or wreaths are acceptable
- Veils and/or ribbons from the headpiece should be manageable for your daughter, fingertip or shorter

Dress Code for Boys

- Dress shirt and tie, or dress shirt and vest, or sweater and dress pants
- Suits or sport coats are optional, though most boys wear them
- Socks must be worn with appropriate dress shoes

students will not be permitted to carry anything (prayer books, rosary beads, etc.) into church

The Symbolism of First Communion Attire

The traditional color of First Communion attire, gowns and suits, is white. For girls, First Communion is one of three major events that calls for a white gown. All three are sacraments, holy events, in the Catholic Church: her baptismal day, her First Communion day, and (if she is called to marriage) her wedding day. So why do they all involve a white gown? The baptismal gown that is given to boys and girls symbolizes purity, joy, and new life. The white color symbolizes that the newly baptized has put on Christ, and it also recalls John's vision in the Book of Revelation: "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:13).

The white also symbolizes one of the effects of Baptism, the washing away of all sins, including original sin. As God says through the Prophet Isaiah, "Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). So the color of the gown reminds us of God's incredible mercy and of the purity of soul that results from Baptism. First Communion gowns and suits/shirts/ties are white on purpose; they are meant to recall all the symbolism of the baptismal gown. First Communion is the second of three Sacraments of Initiation, and so the links with Baptism are very important (white wedding gowns also are intended to recall the symbolism of both Baptism and First Communion). It is often pointed out that white First Communion attire also reminds us of the whiteness of the Eucharistic host that the children will receive. In Catholic Liturgy, white is a color of celebration and triumph worn during the Christmas and Easter Seasons as well as during other special feast days.

Finally, the white attire symbolizes the excitement and celebration that should rightfully accompany a child's First Communion. With all these elements in mind, you can see how deeply symbolic First Communion attire is. You are not just dressing up your child for a major life event; you are wrapping them up in deep symbolism to present them to their Creator for union with Him and for further initiation into His Church. The gown and the suit are holy and symbolic objects and should modestly reflect their purpose.