

FIRST RECONCILIATION / COMMUNION SCHEDULE FOR 2011

ST. PIUS X - ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS

Wednesday, January 26th
7:00 p.m.

Mandatory Meeting for parents.
Program packets distributed.
Location: Farrell Hall

Thursday, March 31st
7:00 p.m.

First Reconciliation
Location: St. Pius X Church

Saturday, April 2nd
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Day of Prayer and Preparation for First Communicants. Parents please sign up to help with day. (This day will not include making banners.)
Location: Farrell Hall

Saturday, April 30th
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Practice for First Communicants and their parents.
Location: St. Pius X Church

Sunday, May 1st
11:00 a.m. Mass

First Holy Communion Mass
Location: St. Pius X Church
(Gather in Farrell Hall by 10:15 a.m.)

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST COMMUNION

WHAT IS THE PARENTS' ROLE IN SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION?

The Church views the role of parents in the religious formation of children as both a privilege and an obligation. When you presented your child to the Church for baptism, you were distinctly reminded that you have the responsibility of 'raising them in the practice of the faith' (Rite of Baptism). This obligation and privilege extends to sacramental preparation.

HOW OLD SHOULD MY CHILD BE FOR FIRST COMMUNION?

The Church says that children with the use of their reason should receive communion as early as possible. The 'age of reason' is traditionally set at seven. However, this age will come earlier and later in different children. If the child does not understand that Christ is present in the Eucharist or cannot treat the sacrament with reverence, then your child is too young to receive First Communion. Each parent knows their child the best, and will recognize their child's readiness.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY FOR THE EUCHARIST?

The first question to ask yourself is 'Is my child at Mass regularly?' If your child is at Mass each Sunday and is capable of paying attention to what is going on, that's the first step. The second question to ask is, 'Does my child have a sincere desire to share in the Eucharist?' When children attend mass regularly, eventually they want to participate more fully. This is a logical progression that leads the child to ask, 'When can I go to communion?' Finally, ask yourself, 'Does my child understand that this consecrated bread and wine is truly the body and blood of Jesus?'

ARE THERE PRAYERS MY CHILD SHOULD BE LEARNING?

As children come to readiness for First Communion, they should be learning the acclamations, responses, and prayers of the Mass. Children can learn these simply by being at Mass and hearing them every week.

Your child should also be introduced to the Rosary, and have memorized the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Act of Contrition. They should be familiar with the format of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

HOW SHOULD MY CHILD BEHAVE AT MASS?

As your child now begins to share in the Eucharist, remind him/her that he/she is an important part of the community gathered at Mass. Encourage your child to participate in the music and prayers, rather than bring along a prayer book or other amusement. Remind your child that at Mass we sing, and pray, and we are quiet sometimes. Help your child to receive the Eucharist with reverence. Even the most agreeable and well-behaved children need to be reminded of these things often.

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most agreeable and well-behaved children need to be reminded of these things often.

HOW DO WE KEEP OUR CHILD FROM GETTING THE IDEA THAT PICTURE TAKING, PRETTY CLOTHES AND PARTIES ARE WHAT FIRST COMMUNION IS ALL ABOUT?

This depends mainly on you. If you as parents focus on these, so will your children. The best way to overcome this problem is to prepare prayerfully as a family. Share your own faith story so that your child will see First Communion as a beginning, rather than an event, or a goal. The thing which makes First Communion special is that it is their first Communion of many.

SHOULD WE NOT HAVE A FIRST COMMUNION PARTY THEN?

On the contrary, this is an excellent time to have a family celebration. Just remember to keep it simple, so that everyone's attention is on the child and the sacrament, rather than the get-together afterwards. You don't want to distract your child or yourself from the meaning for the celebration.

WHAT KIND OF GIFTS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR A FIRST COMMUNICANT?

Gifts are a way of celebrating the child, and the specialness of the day. The only rule of thumb with First Communion gifts is to keep it appropriate. Gifts like video games, bikes, etc., should be kept for Christmas and birthdays. A First Communion gift ought to reflect the importance of the sacrament and the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Appropriate gifts include a children's Bible, a book of children's prayers, classic children's books that share Christian values, books that develop children's self-esteem, a book or medal about the child's patron saint, religious CDs or movies, a subscription to a children's magazine that is wholesome, creative and challenging, Christian games, religious candle for a prayer space in the child's room, Rosary, or a special letter written by you to the child (or to Jesus about the child, and given to the child).

HOW SHOULD THESE SUGGESTIONS BE LIVED OUT IN OUR FAMILY?

Take an interest in what your child is learning. Be familiar with your child's textbook and review their lessons together. Help your child to learn his/her prayers. Pray with and for your child everyday. Pray as a whole family as often as possible. There are plenty of supplemental materials available. Read a good book or watch a good video together and discuss the themes of this preparation time - forgiveness, unconditional love, sacrifice, etc. For books or videos specifically on the sacraments of Reconciliation or Holy Communion, contact Mrs. Julie Nonnenmann at 793-7378 or jnonnenmann@stpiusri.org.

Most importantly, children learn from a good example. Be a good witness of the Christian life!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EUCHARIST

WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST?

The night before Christ died, He instituted the Eucharist. In the context of the Mass, a priest acting in the person of Christ, takes our offerings of bread and wine. Through the grace of God, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WE EAT THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST?

We then have Christ's life within us. It is true that "You are what you eat." The Eucharist is source, and it is strength. It is also a gift (the word Eucharist actually means thanksgiving). The Eucharist is the reason for our life, and the highest point of life, the summit.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF MY LIFE AS A CATHOLIC?

To gradually transform yourself into a perfect imitation of Christ. We must be able to echo with Paul, "I live no longer I, but Christ in me." (Galatians 2:20) Then, when we die, we will be united with Him in Heaven. He tells us in John 6 that "unless we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we will not have life within us." Therefore, the Eucharist is necessary to this transformation of ourselves into His life. The Mass is the most important thing in the week, because it is there that we receive the Eucharist. Reconciliation and the other sacraments are also necessary in the following of Christ.

IS RECONCILIATION NECESSARY FOR THE RECEPTION OF EUCHARIST?

We cannot receive the Body of Christ unworthily, without sinning. (1 Corinthians 11:27). The cleansing nature of the sacrament of Reconciliation prepares us for a worthy reception of Our Lord.

WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE MUST WE MAKE TO CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls Christ's love the "love that never ends". (CCC 5). The Eucharist, as the highest sign of His love, is a "pledge of future glory." (CCC 1402) This calls for love as a response. We must receive Christ in respect and reverence, and should respond to Christ's gift of love in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, whether simply in the moments after Communion, or in formal prayer in our Eucharistic Chapel.

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WHERE CAN I ADORE HIM?

Jesus is present in the Church even after Mass, because there are consecrated Hosts kept in the tabernacle for Communion to the sick. We may come to be with Jesus and adore Him in the church even outside of Mass. The best place to do that is in the Eucharistic Chapel, where the Eucharist is exposed. Visiting Him in the Blessed Sacrament is a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ Our Lord. (CCC 1418)

WHY DO WE USE THE TERM COMMUNION?

In the Eucharist, we are united to Christ. This unity is the principal effect of the Eucharist. This unity is both bodily and spiritual, and is a taste of heaven. We are as united to Christ as the body is to its head. We are also united to each other as members of the Body of Christ. Mass is a community event, and there is a reason we receive all at the same time – and not alone. Community is the deepest vocation of the church

SHOULD THIS COMMUNION WITH OTHERS MEAN ANYTHING IN MY DAILY LIFE?

Therefore, we are committed to serving one another. We are especially committed to the poor. At the end of Mass, the priest tells us to love and serve the Lord. We can do this by loving and serving one another - in the unity created by the Eucharist. This can be done by either prayers, donation of money or time to charitable groups, and by volunteering in the parish.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S RULE ABOUT FASTING BEFORE GOING TO COMMUNION?

Church law requires Catholics to fast from food and beverages for one hour before going to communion.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RECONCILIATION

DIDN'T BAPTISM REMOVE SIN? WHY DO I NEED THIS SACRAMENT?

Yes, original sin (and any personal sins we may have committed before baptism) are washed away in Baptism, but we all know that we continue to commit sins. As the Apostle John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

Baptism in itself is not enough. The point of the spiritual life is conversion – becoming more and more like Christ. Since sin breaks that process, we have to remove that sin from our lives. The sacrament of Reconciliation is a tremendous gift to us that allows us to improve ourselves.

WHY DO CATHOLICS CONFESS THEIR SINS TO A PRIEST?

Confession is a very intimate experience in which you receive forgiveness from Jesus Himself. In this sacrament, you receive pardon and peace and are restored to the fullness of grace and unity with God. Since this is a sacrament between us and God, why does a priest need to be involved? There is a social aspect to sin – it not only affects our relationship with God but it also alienates us from other people and from the Church. In this sacrament, our relationship with God is restored, but we are also reconciled to each other and the Church. By confessing to a priest, we are acknowledging this aspect of the sacrament. The priest represents both Christ and His Church.

The Roman Catholic faith is an incarnational one, a sacramental one, a faith which sees God acting through physical objects (water, oil, bread, wine) and by means of human instruments, including a priest hearing confessions.

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THIS SACRAMENT?

The power to forgive sins was one Christ gave to his apostles (Luke 10:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). After He rose from the dead Christ said to the apostles, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:22-23).

We can be truly sorry for our sins--that is essential for forgiveness--but we can't forgive our own sins. We can't absolve ourselves. That is a power reserved to God alone. Through Christ that power was conferred on his apostles and their successors, the bishops, and their helpers, the priests. Confession is not an option. It is the ordinary (normative) means through which sins are forgiven.

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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONFESSION AND RECONCILIATION?

These are two names for the same sacrament, each focusing on an aspect of this complicated sacrament. Confession, one aspect of the Sacrament of Reconciliation which used to receive the greatest emphasis, is now seen as just one step in the total process. Confession of sin can only be sincere if it is preceded by the process of conversion. It is actually the external expression of the interior transformation that conversion has brought about in us. By calling the sacrament Reconciliation, we are focusing on the effect of the sacrament (reconciliation with both God and neighbor) instead of just the external aspects.

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THIS SACRAMENT?

Deliverance of sin, reconciliation with God and neighbor, peace and calm of conscience are just some of the effects of this sacrament. There is also given a grace in this sacrament to overcome sin in the future. Reconciliation also foreshadows the judgment we will receive at our death, and helps us prepare our hearts that we might be found worthy of heaven.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THIS SACRAMENT?

First, the "penitent" (or the one who is to receive the sacrament), must have contrition. This is sorrow for sins committed combined with the resolution not to sin again. This in itself is a gift from God.

Secondly, the penitent must confess their sins to a priest in person.

Thirdly, the penitent must perform some penance to finish the healing of his soul and to make amends for his sin. Along with the spiritual healing, some sins do require a practical reparation. Depending on the situation, the priest may ask you to return stolen goods, restore someone's reputation, pay compensation for injuries, confess to a crime, etc.

CAN I CONFESS OVER THE TELEPHONE OR EMAIL?

No. Every sacrament requires the physical presence of another person. We are not alone in our journey to heaven, and this aspect of sacraments reminds us of that. When Jesus performed all of His healings and miracles, He was physically present to His people. Telephone confessions or email confessions remove the physical aspect to the sacrament.

The other strong argument against telephone or email confessions is the lack of privacy. Neither mode of communication is guaranteed to be private. While confessing your sins requires the presence of another person (a priest), it also requires respect for privacy.

CAN A PRIEST EVER TELL ANYONE WHAT I HAVE CONFESSED?

Never. Absolutely not. Every priest who hears confessions is bound under very strict penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitent's lives. This secret, which has no exceptions, is called the "seal of confession." A priest is never allowed to mention anything brought up in confession – even to you.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST RECONCILIATION

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO KNOW?

- A child needs to know the difference between right and wrong.
- The child needs to understand that accidents or mistakes are not sins.
- When we deliberately choose to do what is wrong and turn away from God, we sin.
- God is loving and merciful. God will always forgive us if we ask.
- Jesus has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation through which our sins are forgiven and we receive the grace to live as God's children.
- We must be willing to forgive others, just as God forgives us.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD IS READY FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION?

There are many different ways you can tell if your child is ready for the sacrament. Listen carefully to what your child says about wrongdoing and misbehavior. Encourage the child to take responsibility for his/her behavior rather than blaming others. Watch to see if your child is capable of being sorry and asking forgiveness of others without your prompting.

Then, ask yourself the following:

- Is prayer a part of your child's life?
- Does your child have the capacity for sincere sorrow and make an honest effort to do better?
- Can your child express sorrow and describe wrongdoing in his/her own words?

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE MY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BEYOND "FIRST" RECONCILIATION?

- Plan a family party to celebrate your child's first reconciliation. By acknowledging the importance of this event, you convey its value into the future.
 - During this time of preparation, you are talking with your child about what constitutes a sin. Continue these conversations as your child grows older. Initiate discussions about the temptations in your child's life. How can those temptations be addressed? As children grow into adolescence they are faced with many decisions and temptations, and they need their parent's guidance to help them make good choices and avoid sin.
 - As a family, plan to participate in parish celebrations of reconciliation during Lent and Advent each year. If you make this a serious commitment, and plan ahead, even your teen-agers can arrange their schedules accordingly.
 - What is your attitude toward this sacrament? As a parent, if you participate in the sacrament of reconciliation regularly, your child will most likely want to do so as well.
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Is prayer a part of your child's life? Does your child have the capacity for sincere sorrow and make an honest effort to do better? Can your child express sorrow and describe wrongdoing in his/her own words?

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE MY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BEYOND "FIRST" RECONCILIATION?

Plan a family party to celebrate your child's first reconciliation. By acknowledging the importance of this event, you convey its value into the future. During this time of preparation, you are talking with your child about what constitutes a sin. Continue these conversations as your child grows older. Initiate discussions about the temptations in your child's life. How can those temptations be addressed? As children grow into adolescence they are faced with many decisions and temptations, and they need their parent's guidance to help them make good choices and avoid sin. As a family, plan to participate in parish celebrations of reconciliation during Lent and Advent each year. If you make this a serious commitment, and plan ahead, even your teen-agers can arrange their schedules accordingly. What is your attitude toward this sacrament? As a parent, if you participate in the sacrament of reconciliation regularly, your child will most likely want to do so as well.