



First Reconciliation & Holy Communion

2024 -2025
Handbook



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
MISSOULA'S JESUIT PARISH



Things to know about the First Communion Mass:

Photo policy:

Please keep cell phones off or on silent during the Mass. Please refrain from taking photos/videos during Mass. We will have photographer there and will share the photos! There will also be opportunity to take photos before/after Mass and our priests are happy to pose with your child after Mass!

Scheduling:

If you have a schedule conflict for April 27 th or wish for your child to receive First Communion at a different time, please reach out we will work with you.

Allergies:

If your child has a wheat or other food allergy related to the Eucharistic elements, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate

“Children are the joy of the family and of society...Children are a gift. They are a gift. Each one is unique and unrepeatable, and at the same time unmistakably linked to his or her roots. Indeed to be a son or daughter according to God’s plan, means carrying in oneself the memory and hope of a love that has become tangible by kindling the life of another human being, original and new.”

–Pope Francis, General Audience, Feb. 12, 2015

Things to know about the First Holy Communion Mass:

Seating:

Please arrive early to find your families designated pew, marked with your child's name.

Guests:

This is a celebratory milestone for your child! Family and friends welcome to come witness and pray for your child on this special day. Non-Catholic guests welcome to attend and come forward during communion with the their arms crossed to receive a blessing if they wish. We ask that all families and guests remember that this is Mass!

Dress Code:

There is no formal dress code, but children are encouraged to dress appropriately for the occasion! Girls are welcome (but not required) to wear the traditional white outfit with a veil, and for boys: dress pants/shirt or a suit, or nice pants and polo. Celebratory and appropriate is the goal!



Class Schedule For First Holy Communion

*All meetings/classes to take place in the Dave Thomas Room
in the Loyola building (white building closest to the hospital)*

Sunday, January 12, 2025, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, February 9, 2025, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, March 9, 2025, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, April 13, 2025, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, April 27, 2025, 1:00 pm – First Communion Mass



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you. Thank you for sharing the gift of your child with our parish and with the world! We are honored to be a small part of your child's faith formation and to help them connect deeper to their roots as part of the family of God. We first serve the role of empowering, supporting, and walking alongside you, their parents, primary caregivers, and first and most important teachers of the faith. You are their mentors in faith by practicing it on your own, inviting them into that experience, and bringing them into the faith community through their Baptism and their presence at Mass.

As your child prepares to participate more fully in the Mass and the family of God by receiving the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, we serve a supplemental role in helping your child understand these sacraments so that they are able to receive them with confidence, joy and appreciation. Again, we are honored to be a part of this small step in the journey of faith for your child. It is only the beginning of what will be, with God's grace, a beautiful life in Christ!

Please find in this packet the information and guidelines concerning the sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion. This is to help you, their parents and caregivers, help them! Also included is the class schedule, and any information on day of logistics for both the celebrations of these sacraments. If you have any questions, concerns, or needs, please feel most welcomed to reach out! We are here to help!

Yours in Christ,

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Director of Faith Formation*

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First Holy Communion

What is Communion/Eucharist?

The Eucharist refers to the Body and Blood of Christ. It remains in the form of bread and wine, but changes in substance and meaning to the Body and Blood at Mass. The Eucharist unites us with Christ and his Church (one another!) in a physical, tangible way, which we can see, touch, and taste! It is more than a remembering of the Last Supper or past events, it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, and also makes us present in the Divine Kingdom of God. Communion refers to our participation in the Eucharist, though the words are often used interchangeably. This all happens through God's grace and is one of the mysteries of faith we may not fully understand in this life. Holy Communion/Eucharist is an ongoing sacrament we can receive for the rest of our lives!

Some ways to know your child is ready for their First Communion:

- A general understanding of who Jesus is and his love for each person
- Ability to attentively participate at Mass
- A desire to receive the sacrament
- An attempt to understand and distinguish between the visible signs (bread and wine) and the invisible spiritual realities (Body and Blood of Christ)

Please be mindful: these are not signs of readiness to prepare for the sacrament, any child age 7 or older is welcome in preparation class. Also know that each child is unique and may not show all these signs of readiness. You know your child best and we will work with you if you think that your child is ready.

What you can do to help them prepare:

- Take your child to Mass!
- Emphasize the importance of families and being part of God's family
- Pray before meals

First Reconciliation

What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation calls us to reflect on our wrongdoing and sins and allows us to receive mercy and healing for these things. Receiving this mercy and healing makes it so that we are able to become closer to God and his family (all of us!). This is an ongoing Sacrament that we can receive for the rest of our lives!

Some ways to know your child is ready for their First Reconciliation:

- A general understanding of right from wrong
- Ability to make appropriate choices
- A general understanding of the consequences of their actions for themselves and with other
- A sense of pride or regret for their actions
- Ability to make amends
- Some understanding of who God is and ability to pray and worship

Please be mindful: these are not signs of readiness to prepare for the sacrament, any child age 7 or older is welcome in preparation class. Also know that each child is unique and may not show all these signs of readiness. You know your child best and we will work with you if you think that your child is ready.

What you can do to help them prepare:

- Keep in mind your child is just learning about sin! Help them understand the differences between accidents/bad choices and sins – see Child's examination of conscience
- Alleviate fears and reassure them this is about healing and mercy
- Be a model! By bringing them to Mass, praying at home, and maybe even going to reconciliation yourself!

Child's Examination Of Conscience

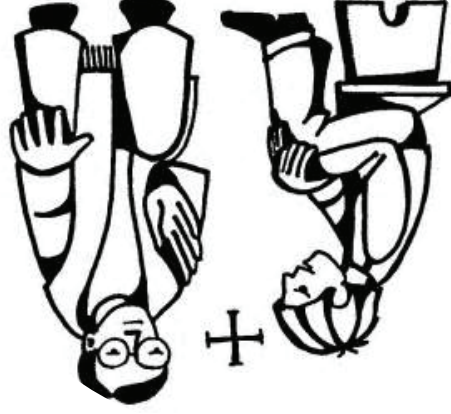


- Do I pray daily, or try to work on my relationship with God?
- Do I listen to and obey the caring adults in my life, like my parents and teachers?
- Do I help at home or at school?
- Do I share with others?
- Do I tell the truth?
- Have I been mean to anyone, by yelling, saying angry words, teasing, making fun of?
- Have I been mean to anyone physically by hitting, kicking, fighting?
- Have I cheated, on homework, a test, or in a game?
- Have I taken something that does not belong to me?

First Reconciliation Service

The December 9th First Reconciliation Service will be held in the church. Please arrive early so that we may begin on time. We will hold a short prayer service and then receive instructions on how to proceed. This Reconciliation service is just for the children to receive the sacrament for the first time.

This is a wonderful opportunity to make this a special evening for your child. We invite close friends and family to come support your child by praying for them in a quiet and reverent way during the service. We encourage you to celebrate with your child and any guests afterwards in a way that your family sees fit!



Class Schedule for

First Reconciliation

All meetings/classes to take place in the Dave Thomas Room in the Loyola building (white building closest to the hospital)

Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 6-6:30 pm –Parent only meeting

Sunday, September 8, 2024, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, October 6, 2024, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, November 10, 2024, 9-9:50 am

Sunday, December 8th, 2024, 9-9:50 am

Monday, December 9th, 2024, 6:30 pm – First Reconciliation