



First Penance and First Holy Communion at St. James Church

A few thoughts for parents:

As we begin this journey together, it is important to think about the role parents play in passing on the faith to their children. The parish will help support you in many ways, but it is the parents who have the greatest impact on a child's faith and faith development.

Sacraments aren't events that are separate from our lives, the way we raise our children, and how we spend time with our families. Sacraments can be seen as separate events, but are, in fact, celebrating the single reality of God's love for us. In each sacrament's celebration we

- *Remember* God's saving work in Jesus
- *Celebrate* God's action within the life of the community
- *Express belief* and confidence in God's loving presence into the future

The Sacrament of Penance celebrates God's forgiveness: through the sacrament we are reconciled with God and with one another. In addition, through the grace of reconciliation God empowers us to be people, parents, spouses, and friends who forgive.

In Eucharist we celebrate union (communion) with God through Christ. At the same time, in receiving Jesus present in the Eucharist, we are nourished and given the grace to be the presence of Jesus to others.

What does this mean for you and your family as you prepare your son or daughter for the first celebrations of Penance and Eucharist?

Since sacraments are always community celebrations, your *ongoing* connection with this faith community is important. Your connection to this parish is an important element of your son's or daughter's experience of the sacrament – it is a challenge to speak of the community of faith if your child doesn't have a sense of being part of this community. Thus, making an extra effort to participate in parish activities and weekly liturgy is important.

In addition to celebrating what God is doing in the sacrament, each sacrament celebrates what God has done and continues to do in your life and in the life of your family. Helping your child see the connection between the sacraments and your life is essential.

This is also a good time for you to reflect on your own understanding of sacraments and to grow in your awareness of God's presence in your life. Praying and reflecting, reading the scriptures for Sunday liturgy in advance, simply taking time for quiet – all of these actions can foster your growth in faith.

The following pages are filled with information concerning all the details that make First Penance and First Holy Communion at St. James a special celebration. For well over twenty years we have preserved some very special traditions surrounding these celebrations. Things like the class quilt, which is lovingly made each year and includes a square for each child with their picture. These quilts are preserved until the class makes their Confirmation, at which time the quilt is once again hung in the Gathering Area.

The banners which each child makes with their parents are hung in the church during the month of May as a constant reminder to our parishioners that our community is alive and continually being nourished. Afterward, your children may put this banner in their box of keepsakes or hang it in their rooms as a memory of their special day, as my own children did so long ago.

The Sacrament of Penance is a community 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 become more aware of being a forgiving and forgiven family.

Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of Initiation, the other two being Baptism and Confirmation. Each of these sacraments is a significant mark along the faith journey of a Catholic Christian. Eucharist is the core of the Christian life, the source of our *communion* with Christ and one another. Our faith is founded in it and fed by it. It was the focus of unity for the earliest churches and has continued to be so down through the ages. It is an act of *thanksgiving* (the word "Eucharist" means this). What are we thankful for? EVERYTHING – beginning with our existence. Eucharist is the "manna" that sustains us on our journey through the material world!

So, when you are talking about First Holy Communion with your child remind them that this sacrament unites them with the entire Body of Christ – the bigger family that they belong to. Help them realize that, each Sunday, millions of believers are brought together, strengthened and fed by Jesus through Eucharist. We need this – often – in order to go back out into the world and be Jesus to everyone we encounter. And that's what works toward making our world a loving and just place for all of us.

God bless your families as you prepare for this milestone along your child's faith journey.

Nancy

Sacramental Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Beginning of the Year Parent Meeting:

Monday, September 19th at 7:30pm

Classes Begin:

Tuesday, September 20th at 4:30

Family Program – Sunday, September 25 at 10:00

Retreat Day – First Reconciliation:

Saturday, January 7th – 9:30 – 11am

First Reconciliation:

Saturday, January 14th at 10am

Student Mass Preparation Activities:

Tuesday, February 14th during class

Student Mass (with 5th & 6th graders):

Sunday, February 19th at 11:30am

Retreat Day – First Eucharist:

Saturday, April 28th – 9-12:30

First Eucharist Practices:

Tuesday – April 17th and 24th during class (students only)

Sunday – April 15th during regular session (Family Program)

First Eucharist:

Saturday, May 5th at 10am – Tuesday classes

5pm – Family Program

Sunday, May 6th at 11:30am – Family Program

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Thinking about our choices

It is good to ask ourselves questions about the choices we make every day. This helps us grow into more caring and loving persons. It is something Catholic Christians do carefully before they celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation.

An Examination of Conscience

Here are some questions that might be part of an examination of conscience. Use them to help you think about your everyday words and actions.

Have I forgotten to listen to God or thank Him for the many gifts He has given me?

Have I been unkind or hurtful to my family and friends?

Have I chosen not to tell the truth?

Have I decided not to listen to or obey my parents and those who care for me?

Have I chosen not to forgive those who hurt me?

Have I been disrespectful in not caring for my body, my things, or the earth?

Format for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. Sit down facing Father.
2. Father will greet you - Greet him.
3. Make the Sign of the Cross as you say, "Bless me, Father, these are my sins."
4. Now tell how you have not loved God, others, yourself, or the earth.
5. Listen to Father as he talks to you. He may ask you to do a good deed or say a prayer.
6. *Say the **Prayer of Sorrow / 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."

7. Father blesses you and gives you God's forgiveness.
8. Say "Thank you, Father." Then you may leave.
9. Return to your seat and say the prayers Father has given you for penance.

**At First Penance the Prayer of Sorrow will be recited as a group.*

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AT ST. JAMES CHURCH

Week of January 9th – Quilt Pictures Due

In order to reinforce the concept of ‘being one in our Church family’, we ask your help in personalizing a quilt of all the second graders which will be made by the St. James Banner Committee. In the near future, an envelope will be provided for you to **send in a wallet-sized picture (no larger than approx. 3”x4”) of your child to be scanned for our quilt. Be sure to put your child’s name on the back. Your picture will be returned.**

Banners

Created by you and your child at our retreat, the banners are used to decorate the Church for First Holy Communion and will remain displayed through Pentecost. Then, please pick up your banner from the tables in the hallway outside the Religious Education office.

MATERIALS to bring on Retreat Day: any color felt (12” x 34”); contrasting ribbon if desired.

Lettering for your child’s name as well as symbols to be used on the banners will be provided.

Please Note: For those students unable to attend the Retreat, their banner is due April 28, 2011. Please stop by the Religious Ed Office for directions & pre-cut symbols for your banner.

Saturday, April 28 9:00am-12:30pm

Retreat Day for our students & parents is a special and memorable way to prepare for First Holy Communion. **At least one parent is expected to attend this retreat with their child.** Babysitting may be provided if there is a need. Please let us know.

Retreat Day includes a host of fun activities for the children, including:

- Faith Stories from Parishioners
- Creating Your Banner
- Rehearse songs for the First Communion Mass
- Practice reception of Eucharist
- Exploring our church’s sacred space



Saturday, May 5, 2012 (or Sunday, May 6th for Family Program Students)

First Holy Communion Mass at 10am for our Tuesday afternoon students.

Family Program First Communion Masses Saturday at 5pm or Sunday at 11:30am

Please keep in mind the physical size of our worship space as you plan your guest list. There will be approximately 35 First Communicants at the 10am Mass on Saturday.

Seating

is reserved for each child and 2 adults (usually parents) on First Communion Day. Non-reserved seats are available for all other family members.

The arrangement of seating has been carefully planned. We realize that there are single parent families and we have tried to be very sensitive to that fact. That is why we ask that two adults sit with each child. If we deviate or allow one family to have more than two adults for one child, that would be unfair to all. I know that when you think about it and see how the seating plan works you will understand our circumstances. If there are other siblings, you can have them sit nearby with a friend or relative. It is “the First Communicant’s special day”.

Receiving both Body (bread) and Blood (wine) – explaining “Real Presence” to your child

We, as Catholics, believe that when the priest blesses (consecrates) our gifts of bread and wine, that bread and wine truly *become* the Body and Blood of Christ. When we receive the Body of Christ and respond “Amen” we are saying “yes” to putting on the *essence* of Jesus for the world. When we receive the Blood of Christ and respond “Amen” we are saying “yes” to becoming the *life force* of Jesus to the world. The act of ingesting Christ should nourish and empower our souls. It commits us to the same mission Jesus so clearly and consistently fulfilled: all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Therefore, we would like the children to experience their first Eucharist under both species. However, we will respect your wishes if you decide that you or your child does not want to receive the cup. Please indicate that fact at the proper time to the Eucharistic Minister.

ATTIRE

GIRLS: White or off-white dresses and dress shoes.

Veils, flowers, hats – optional; Tiaras - **Not** an option

BOYS: Suit or Jacket, shirt, tie & dress slacks, dress shoes (no sneakers)

Children should NOT carry or wear anything in or on their hands.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In order to keep the focus on the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, and to keep from obstructing the view of the rest of the congregation - **photos are to be taken only from your seat.**

HOW TO RECEIVE JESUS IN COMMUNION

- Walk to the altar with your hands folded in prayer
- Think about Jesus, whom you will receive
- As your turn comes, place your left hand on top of your right hand.
- When you hear the words “The Body of Christ”, answer “Amen”.
- After the Host is placed in your hand, place the Host in your mouth, and chew and swallow it.
(at First Communion Mass - Wait for parents to do the same)
- Then, move to the Eucharistic Minister holding the cup.
- When you hear the words “The Blood of Christ”, answer “Amen”.
- Take a sip from the cup.
(at First Communion Mass - Wait for parents to do the same)
- Return to your seat (with your family) with your hands folded in prayer.
- This is a special time for you with Jesus:

Think of all the things you want to thank Jesus for.

Think of all the things you want to talk to Jesus about.

