

Information for First Holy Communion Spring 2022



St. Luke Catholic Church



Preparing Your Child for First Communion

"Parents will always have a greater impact on their children, for better or for worse, than the classroom religion teacher, because daily life at home is a powerful and constant act of witness."

(A Pastoral Letter on Handing on the Faith, by Most Reverend John R. Keating, Second Bishop of Arlington.)

We take joy in helping you prepare your child for First Holy Communion and to join the worshipping community at the Table of the Lord. Your child's appreciation for this sacrament, however, is mainly in your hands. You, as parents, are the ones from whom your child learns most of his/her religious beliefs and attitudes.

The book, [We Believe & Celebrate First Communion](#), from Sadlier publishers is provided to assist you in this preparation. 'Gather and Share God's Word', 'Believe and Celebrate', 'Respond and Pray' through each of the six chapters with your child. We trust you will find the chapters, lessons, and activities valuable in using this book with your child. We hope that sharing this preparation with your child will be a very rewarding experience for each of you.

We ask that your child show the completed book to their catechist/teacher the week of April 11, 2022. This book is your child's to keep.

Your child will also receive a countdown to First Communion Calendar. Meant to be done two weeks prior to May 7, 2022 (Start it on April 24). There are different activities/Scripture readings to do in the two weeks leading up to First Communion. It's a fun way to prepare for the Sacrament.

Catechists/teachers help children prepare for First Communion primarily by reviewing the Mass. "The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324). The Eucharist is the center of our Catholic life. It brings us together, unites us, and gives us the strength to live as the People of God. The Eucharist is a sacrament of loving, caring, and sharing. If your children do not attend Mass regularly, how can they understand and appreciate what they rarely experience?

The celebration of Mass is...the center of the whole Christian life...All other liturgical rites and all the works of the Christian life are linked to the Eucharistic celebration, flow from it, and have it as their end.

--General Instructions on the Roman Missal

FIRST COMMUNION INFORMATION AND HOME PREPARATION

Children are required to attend Mass each weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation.

Parents, as first teachers, have the responsibility of making sure that their children **receive the Sacrament of Penance regularly**. Prior to the celebration of the Sacrament of First Communion, parents are strongly encouraged to bring their children to receive the Sacrament of Penance again.

Mass responses should be memorized. Please go over them with your child, so he/she can comfortably participate in the Mass (page 6 of this booklet).

How to receive Communion: To show reverence and respect for the Eucharist, make a slight bow of your head before receiving Communion.

IN THE HAND: Approach the priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, with hands held high and palms up, one hand on top of the other. The priest holds up the Host and says: "Body of Christ". **Respond: "Amen"**. The Host is placed in the open hand. Take a step to the side, pick up the Host with the hand on the bottom, and put the Host into your mouth immediately. Return to your seat, kneel and say a prayer thanking Jesus for his many gifts.

ON THE TONGUE: Approach the priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The priest lifts up the Host and shows it to the communicant and says, "The Body of Christ". **Respond: Amen**, then hold your head up, open your mouth and gently put out your tongue.

TO RECEIVE FROM THE CHALICE: move to the priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion who says: "Blood of Christ". Respond: "Amen". Take the chalice carefully in both hand; take a small sip from it. (Students will not be offered the Blood of Christ at First Communion, but this is good for them to know.)

Return to your seat, kneel and say a prayer thanking Jesus for his many gifts and join in the song of Thanksgiving.

Explain the Communion fast of the Church to your child: Canon 919 – **"Whoever is to receive the blessed Eucharist is to abstain, for at least one hour before Holy Communion, from all food and drink, with the exception of water and medicine"**. In most cases, an hour elapses between the time a person leaves home for church and time for Communion. However, your child needs to know about the Communion fast as part of the Catholic Faith.

Explaining the “Real Presence” of Jesus to Children

One way to accurately but simply explain transubstantiation to a child is to say:

“When we celebrate the Eucharist, God changes the bread and wine so they become Jesus himself. It still looks and tastes like bread and wine.”

We may explain why Jesus gives himself as bread and wine by saying:

“Jesus wants to be very close to you. He wants to become part of you and for you to become part of Him. The Eucharist helps us to be more like Jesus.”

“...parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it.”

(Vatican Council II "Declaration on Christian Education")



MASS PARTICIPATION

Catholics over the age of seven (7) are required by Canon Law to attend Mass each Sunday and Holy Day. You, as Catholic parents, have a serious moral obligation to bring children who have reached the age of reason (usually 7 years of age) to Mass. Please model the Catholic faith by your regular participation in the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance.

**Masses at St Luke Church
Saturday 5:30 pm
Sunday 7:30 am, 9 am and 11 am.**

Children who reach the age of seven (7) tend to think in very concrete terms. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity and belonging. Children grasp these concepts from everyday experiences such as: sharing, listening, eating, giving thanks, and celebrating. They begin to understand the Eucharist from their experiences of belonging to a family, being loved, and sharing friendship.

Before receiving First Communion, the children are expected to know how to make the Sign of the Cross, say the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, grace before meals, bless themselves with Holy Water when entering and leaving the church, as well as, the following:

Mass responses: (to be memorized.)

The Lord be with you.
AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT.

The Word of the Lord.
THANKS BE TO GOD.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John).
GLORY TO YOU, O LORD.

The Gospel of the Lord.
PRAISE TO YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We pray to the Lord.
LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Lift up your hearts.
WE LIFT THEM UP TO THE LORD.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
IT IS RIGHT AND JUST.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD GOD OF HOSTS. HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF YOUR GLORY. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST. BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

The mystery of faith.
WE PROCLAIM YOUR DEATH, O LORD, AND PROFESS YOUR RESURRECTION UNTIL YOU COME AGAIN.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever.
AMEN.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT.

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY THAT YOU SHOULD ENTER UNDER MY ROOF, BUT ONLY SAY THE WORD AND MY SOUL SHALL BE HEALED.

Body of Christ. **AMEN.**



THE FAMILY AT MASS

Parents have the unique privilege of introducing their children to the central act of worship of the Catholic faith--participation in the Sunday Mass. Each Sunday the Church celebrates the Easter story, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Catholic Christians we gather to give glory to God, to express our oneness with the Catholic community, and to be nourished and renewed in our faith in order to go forth to bring Christ to the world.

Saint Paul writes to the people of Corinth, "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..."

WE GATHER

The Mass has two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

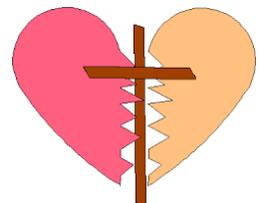


The **Introductory Rite** prepares us for the Liturgy of the Word.

Having arrived on time for Mass, find a place where your child can clearly see what is happening. Notice the color of the priest's vestments.

The priest is the celebrant/presider and leads us in prayer. The role of the Assembly is important and active. We pray with our whole body, our hands in prayer, as we reach out in the Sign of Peace kneel, stand, bow and genuflect form our prayer. Recite the responses and expect your child to learn them as well.

The **Penitential Rite** gives us the opportunity to reflect on our actions of the past week and to ask God's forgiveness for any way in which we have failed to live in a Christ-like way.



WE LISTEN

Liturgy of the Word

"When I heard your words, O Lord, I devoured them; they became my joy and the happiness of my heart." (Jeremiah 15:16).



Lector

This is a time of active listening and responding. The **First Reading** is usually taken from the **Old Testament**. The **Psalm** (Old Testament) is our response to the First Reading. The **Second Reading**, from the **New Testament** is from one of the letters to the early church.

Explain to your child that we stand at the reading of the **Holy Gospel** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – New Testament). The priest reads the Gospel to show our deepest respect for the words and actions of Jesus Christ. Christ is present in his Word as he is present in the Eucharist. At least one of the readings, probably the Gospel, is a story to discuss with your child.

The **Homily** explains God's Word to us.

During the **Creed** we profess our faith in all that the Catholic Church teaches.

In the **Prayers of the Faithful/General Intercessions** we pray for everyone who needs God's healing love and guidance. Help your child think of those for whom he/she would like to pray.

Preparation of the Gifts

In describing the early Christian community Saint Paul writes, "Those who believed shared all things in common...dividing everything on the basis of each one's need."

The **Offertory** and **Preparation of the Gifts** prepare us for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Ask an Usher to have your family bring up the gifts on Sunday. Perhaps this could mark a birthday or anniversary. Encourage your child to make an offering from their own funds to place in the collection. The amount does not matter. The important thing is that it comes from their own money.



WE RECEIVE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS

Liturgy of the Eucharist



"Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10:16).

"I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry, no one who believes in me shall thirst again." (John 6:35).

"I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever." (John 6:51).

The bread and wine brought up to the Altar during the **Eucharistic Prayer** are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. We should look at the raised Host and silently say, "My Lord and My God!"

"Our Father" (Lord's Prayer)

When his friends asked Jesus how they ought to pray, Jesus prayed the prayer we now call the "Our Father." The Hebrew word that Jesus used for "Father" is "Abba" or "Daddy." The children should know this prayer by heart and join with the congregation in praying it reverently.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Sign of Peace:

We are invited to exchange a sign of Christ's peace with those around us. Teach your child to acknowledge someone near them with a "peace be with you"

Breaking of the Bread

Once more we kneel and the priest lifts up the Host and breaks it so that we may all share the Body of Christ in Holy Communion. While the bread is being broken and cups poured for communion, we sing or say: "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us (2 times); concluding "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Communion



The priest invites us to Holy Communion, saying: "Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." We respond: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Demonstrate the proper way to receive the host:

Make a slight bow before receiving Communion. Priest says: "Body of Christ". Respond: "Amen".

In the hand: Two hands outstretched, one on top of the other, palms up. Step to the side, the bottom

hand then takes the Host from the top hand, and reverently places it in the mouth. Return to the pew, spend some time thanking and praising God for his gift to us.



WE GO FORTH TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD

During the **Concluding Rite** we are blessed and dismissed to go and serve the Lord and one another. Like Mary, who carried the child Jesus in her womb, we carry Christ to others: first to our family, second to our neighbors and friends, and then to those at work and school. Participating in Mass makes a difference in our lives. We should see Christ in others, pray more, and make a difference in the lives of everyone we meet until we are renewed again at Mass the following Sunday.

SIGNS OF FAITH

Parents, you can help your child prepare for full participation in the celebration of the Eucharist by explaining the **signs and symbols** which are used by the Catholic faith in celebrating all the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

CANDLES

When we see a lighted candle in church we remember that Christ is the Light of the World. The **Paschal Candle** reminds us that through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord we are brought to New Life in Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega. We are called to carry the Light of Christ to a darkened world.

WATER

Water is a sign of new life and of cleansing. Baptism makes us members of the church and are cleansed of Original Sin through the pouring on of water. We make the Sign of the Cross when we enter the church after dipping a finger in the Holy Water to remind us of our Baptism. The priest washes his hands during the Preparation of the Gifts so that he will be free of sin and worthy to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass. Water is mixed with wine to represent the humanity of Christ.



BREAD AND WINE

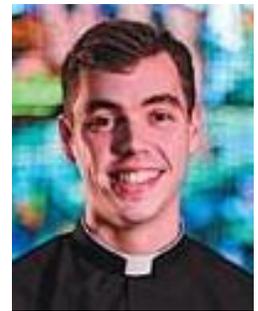
During the Eucharistic Prayer, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Just as it takes many grains of wheat to produce a loaf of bread and many grapes to produce wine so each of us is part of the Church--the Body of Christ in the world.

THE PRIEST



Fr. Richard Guest

Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest acts in the person of Christ in a special way. Christ is present in the person of the priest who offers the Sacrifice of the Mass, changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.



Fr. Joseph Moschetto

THE ASSEMBLY--THE HOLY PEOPLE OF GOD

All who gather for the Eucharist play a part in the sacred action. The role of the faithful is to recall the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord, to give thanks and praise, to offer Christ together with the priest, and to join in receiving Communion, thus uniting with all Christians and with God. Through our words, songs, and gestures we participate in the central act of worship of the Catholic faith.



THE WORD



The Lectionary, the book from which the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, takes all its text from the Holy Bible. It is arranged in a special way so that we hear some of all the Gospels in a three-year period. Christ is present in the Word. In John's Gospel we read, "In the beginning was the Word" and "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us". This refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

THE ALTAR

The Altar is the Lord's Table. Bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ by the sacramental action of the priest. It is at the Lord's Table that we are invited to share in the Banquet of the Lord.



SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER

Tell stories from the Bible so that your child can understand and love God's Holy Word. Some scripture stories that your child may enjoy:

John 13:34-35	Jesus gives us a new commandment
Matthew 7:23-27	Put God's word into action
Luke 11:28	Hear the word of God and keep it
Philippians 4:6-9	Prayers and Petitions
John 6:35-37	Jesus gives himself as the Bread of Life
Corinthians 11:23-26	The Last Supper
John 6:1-13	Jesus feeds five thousand
Luke 24	The Road to Emmaus
Luke 9, John 6	The Loaves and Fishes
John 6	The Living Bread
Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 23	The Last Supper

FAMILY PRAYER TIME

Families may find the following form helpful for Scripture sharing:

Gather around the family table or another convenient place and light a candle to symbolize the light of Jesus that is always with us.

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross together.

Read the Scripture passage. Follow with a minute or two of silent reflection.

Each person shares what the Scripture passage mean to them. There is no wrong answer.

Each person offers a prayer of thanksgiving or petition. For example, "Lord I thank you for _____," or "Lord, please help, heal or bless _____."

Slowly recite a memorized prayer such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary.

Some additional suggestions to help you prepare your child for First Communion:

Talk to your child about what he/she learned in their religion class.

Talk to your child about what you see in church--the Altar, stained glass window, the Processional Cross, the Baptismal Font (empty at this time), etc.

Enjoy a regular family meal so that your child can appreciate ritual and tradition as we do in church.

Make sure your child knows how to make the Sign of the Cross properly and to bow in church (we genuflect in the Chapel where the Tabernacle is present). Take your child to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Pray with your child at home and in church.

- Familiarize your child with the sacramentals such as palms, Holy Water (unavailable at this time), the Rosary, pictures and stories of the saints, etc.

Please focus on the true meaning of First Communion -- encountering Jesus in the Eucharist. All the other things - new clothing, gifts and parties - enhance the celebration of the sacrament, but are not the most important.

A Parents' Prayer

God, our Father, pray for us
and fill us with the grace we need
to be good parents.

Bless us and strengthen us
to be a comfort and a guiding light,
a means of support and an advocate of independence.

You sent your son, Jesus, to show us how to love.
As we prepare our children to receive your Son
in the Sacrament of Holy Communion
help us to be thankful for this life entrusted to our care.

Help our children grow in love
and imitation of your Son, Jesus.
Bless our children with a love of sacred scripture
and a desire to always do your will.

We offer our thanks to you, O God,
for all the gifts of Your love. Amen.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated Friday from 9:30 AM-10:00 AM and Saturdays 4:00-5:00 PM (or by appointment).

Parents, as the first teachers of faith, have the responsibility of making sure that their children receive the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation regularly. Prior to the celebration of a sacrament, children preparing to receive First Communion, as well as, family members are strongly encouraged to go to Confession.

First Communion Workshop: April 3 (St. Luke's School) or April 24, 2022 1:30-3:00 PM (Religious Education/Homebased Learning/Other Catholic Schools)
First Communion Banner and Book Due: April 11, 2022
First Communion Practice for Religious Education Students: May 4, 2022 7 pm.
First Communion Practice for SLS Students will be during class.
First Communion: May 7, 2022 at 11 AM in the Church

Banner Instructions:

Students will be receiving Banner Kits to do with a parent. In the banner there are step by step instructions for how to make the first communion banner. Use them as a guide for the banner. There's also information on the symbolism behind each item on the banner.

Please be sure that your child puts their name with the glitter glue on the banner and that the banner is dry before you turn them in. Have your child put their name on the included label and then put the label on the back of the banner.

Banners and First Communion Book should be turned into our office the week of April 11th. Banners not received by April 19th may not be included in the display.

There is NO FIRST COMMUNION ENROLLMENT on February 12, 2022.

Please contact the Office of Religious Education with any questions:
703-356-8419 plusser@saintlukemclean.org or eteter@saintlukemclean.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING FIRST COMMUNION DAY

Date: Saturday, May 7, 2022 at 11 AM
First Holy Communion takes place within the Mass.

Dress: SUNDAY BEST

BOYS: Neatly attired. Boys should wear dress pants, shirt and tie. A suit or suit coat is optional.

GIRLS - Neatly attired, dresses or skirts are appropriate: White or cream or light pastel colored. NO spaghetti straps. They may wear a white/cream sweater with their dress/skirt if desired. Girls may wear a veil or flowers in their hair, they should practice getting used to it.

Sneakers or sport/very casual shoes are not appropriate for either gender.

The children **do not carry** anything in their hands or wear gloves.

Seating: Children will sit together with their classes in a reserved section of the Church. Parents, friends and family may sit in the unreserved seats. Currently, there is no limitation on the number of guests that can be brought.

Arrival Time: Children should arrive **30 minutes** before Mass begins and go to Flaherty Hall where they will meet their class.

Videos & Photos: **Photographs/videos may NOT be taken during the Mass.** Please inform invited family and friends of this policy. First Communion is a sacred Rite within the Catholic Church and is to be revered and respected. We will have a photographer who will photograph your child receiving their First Communion. He will be available for family photos in Flaherty Hall after the Mass.

There will not be a reception following the First Holy Communion Mass due to the pandemic.

FYI:

Sundays, April 3 and 24, 1:30 pm – 1st Communion Workshops (Flaherty Hall)

April 3: SLS students

April 24: Religious Education, Homebased Learners, Other Catholic Schools.

1 parent and their child should attend the workshop.