



*First Reconciliation &
Holy Communion*

2023 - 2024

Handbook



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
MISSOULA'S JESUIT PARISH



Cell phones and cameras or videos

- Cell phones should be off during the Mass.
- Please do not take pictures/videos during Mass. You are welcome to take pictures before and after the Mass in the church or on the church grounds.
- The priests and the children will pose for a group photo after Mass.
- ***Parents are asked to please share the photo policy with their guests.***

Food

Please no food or gum during mass. As a reminder, the church teaches that you should fast for one hour before receiving Communion.

Dress code

- We ask that the children dress as they would for Mass on Sundays. There is no dress code.
- Girls are welcome to wear a traditional white outfit that has a veil. Any color dress is welcomed. Fresh flowers or ribbons in the hair are appropriate.
- Boys can wear suits and ties, a blazer, with or without a tie. Any color dress or polo shirt which is tucked in is appropriate.
- No gym shoes or shorts, please.
- We ask that the girls do not carry purses or wear gloves during Mass.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

As your child's first and primary teacher of the faith, the Church calls you to give a daily witness of your Catholic faith, a manner of living that demonstrates your deeply held spiritual and moral convictions. One of those duties is to show your child how to actively participate at Mass, to appreciate the gift of the Eucharist, and to see the healing of relationships in the sacrament of Reconciliation. These are essential moments of our faith lives, not merely part of a celebratory day for our children.

At St. Francis Xavier Parish, we are here to support your family by providing information and guidance that will help you have the confidence you need in forming your child's spiritual life.

In this handbook please find information and guidelines on preparing children for these two sacraments; they will help you understand your role in influencing and educating your child.



GENERAL GUIDELINES

All parents / guardians who have a child preparing to receive these sacraments are required to attend our parent / guardian meetings.

Your child is expected to attend every scheduled class.

Classes will be between the Masses (9-9:55 a.m.) on specific Sundays. We will meet in the Loyola Center, Dave Thomas room. (Those children attending 8 a.m. Mass will be released early to attend class).

Participation in weekly Mass is vital and essential part of your child's formation in preparing to receive the Eucharist. As young Catholics, children need to have a basic understanding and working knowledge of the Mass, and of the prayers and gestures.

Parents may be required to do "at home" work with their child.

CELEBRATION OF FIRST COMMUNION

Sunday April 21st, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

(Possible second date is April 28th, 2024, at 1:00p.m.)

Wheat gluten / food allergies

Parents: if your child has a specific food allergy (related to the Eucharistic elements) please contact the church front office via email to inform us of your child's needs.

Individual Communion

Families wishing to have their child make their First Communion at another mass or at another Catholic church please contact the church office to see about possibilities.

Seating

Each family will receive a designated pew and it will be marked by your child's banner. Your child will sit on the aisle with parent(s) seated next to them. All other guest will fill in the remaining pew. Please let us know if you need a wheelchair space.

Non-Catholic guests

We ask that the presence and behavior of those present throughout the service not detract in any way from the reverence accorded to the Mass. It is important that those gathered remain prayerful and reverent while in church. If you would like to be in the communion line you may come forward for a blessing. Crossing your arms over your chest will signal the priest to give a blessing to you.

READINESS STANDARDS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

- *Willingness to receive the sacrament
- *Ability to attentively participate in the liturgy
- *Ability to relate to Jesus as one who loves and cares for each person.
- *Ability to distinguish between ordinary bread and the Eucharist.
- *Commitment to have regular attendance at the Eucharist liturgy.
- *Your child will choose to receive Communion in their hand or on the tongue.
- *Your child will choose if they want to receive from the Communion Cup.

PRAYERS TO KNOW

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Act of Sorrow

WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Reconciliation is part of the sacramental process that calls us to be sorry for our sins. We confess our sins to God through the priest and receive absolution for our wrong doings. We are reconciled with God who loves us unconditionally and forgives us. We are called through this process to reconcile with our community, as well. We as humans frequently feel estrangement between God and humanity because of our wrong doings; by confessing our sins and asking forgiveness and atonement, healing then occurs allowing us to feel reconnected with Christ and our community.



WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST?

The Eucharist is receiving the Body and Blood of Christ during the Mass. The word "Eucharist" refers to both the celebration of the Mass and the consecrated bread and wine, which through Transubstantiation becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. "Transubstantiation" is a way our Church describes how the Holy Spirit changes the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Eucharist unites us with Christ and the Church. At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples to "do this in memory of me". The Eucharist is a memorial of the Last Supper. As a memorial, the Eucharist is more than a simple remembering of past events. It makes present the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Our communion with Christ unites us with the Church across time, space and eternity.



READINESS STANDARDS FOR RECONCILIATION

Below are some characteristics you and your child can reflect upon to prepare for the sacrament of Reconciliation.

*Ability to make appropriate choices

*Ability to understand the effect of his/her actions on others

*Ability to know right from wrong

*Ability to take pride in or regret his/her actions

*Ability to make amends

*Ability to pray and worship

*Ability to distinguish between "wrong" and "sin"

PARENTS/ADULTS GUIDE FOR PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Have your child help you prepare a nice meal. Use this occasion to talk about God calling us to a banquet

Bake bread. Talk about how Jesus feeds us. Talk about God shapes us and molds us just as we shape and mold the bread.

Look at family pictures together. Discuss how we are part of God's family

Look at pictures of the child's baptism. Talk about the godparents. Talk about how baptism was and invitation to join God's family and Communion as the invitation to God's banquet

Give your child the task of saying grace before meals. There is nothing like participation in Sunday Mass to teach your children about healing, welcoming and the transformative power of Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

- Explain to your child why we confess our sins
- Read books that will explain confession to your child. (Google catholic books for children)
- Talk about what types of things are sins. A child may not understand what type of things they should confess. For example, bedtime rules have a set time. They need to know that breaking a family rule is not necessarily something to confess.
- Most young children have not committed any significant wrong doings. Keep in mind your child is just learning about sin.
- Alleviate fears. Talk about reconciliation in a positive manner. Explain to the child it is not something to be afraid of. The priest will not yell at a child or punish him/her.
- Go over the process of reconciliation with your child. Take your child to church and show him/her where he/she will meet the priest.

CELEBRATION OF FIRST RECONCILIATION

December 4th, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

The sacrament of First Reconciliation will be held in the church. Families are asked to arrive by 6:15 p.m. so that we may begin on time.

This is a wonderful opportunity to make this a special evening for your son or daughter. It is important that those gathered remain prayerful, silent and reverent during the prayer service. Please turn off cell phones during this time. Children must receive this sacrament prior to receiving First Communion.

We will have a brief prayer service and you will receive direction at that time as to how to proceed. The children will be the only ones receiving this sacrament tonight.

The priests will be positioned at Reconciliation Stations set up in the church. You will be directed from the pew by an usher when it is time for you to come forward. Parents will bring their child to the priest, introduce them, and then return to their seat. Once the child has received the sacrament, they will come to you in the pew, and you will pray together.

If your child wants prefers a particular priest, this is not a problem. Please inform the usher of your preference and he will honor your request. Please realize that in certain situations the wait could be longer.

Families are free to leave once the sacrament has been received. Certificates will be in the back of the church as you leave.

CHILDS EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

- Do I pray daily?
- Do I listen and obey my parents, or other adults who love and take care of me?
- Do I help at home or at school?
- Do I always share with others?
- Do I always tell the truth even if it means I would be in trouble?
- Have I been mean or said angry words to anyone?
- Have I cheated in a game or on a test?
- Have I made fun of or teased others?
- Have I started or been in a fight?
- Have I taken something that does not belong to me?

