

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish
Office of Religious Education

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Dear First Communion Parents;

In accordance with Church tradition, Sacred Heart Parish confers the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist on children for the first time during their second-grade year. In order to adequately prepare the children for the reception of these sacraments and to ensure the continuation of their faith formation begun in grade 1, our Parish's Grade 2 program includes both a doctrinal component and a sacramental component.

As you know, we began to use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd ("CGS") Faith Formation method last year for grade 1 and in both the doctrinal and sacramental components of our grade 2 program.

CGS is a wonderful method of faith formation that is centered on the joy of the children in their encounter with God. It uses scriptural and liturgical themes that most resonate with children's religious needs according to their age levels to nourish this joy. CGS eliminates most of the scholastic elements of CCD that we had been using. Instead, CGS aims to become an experience of life, an education in faith, and a celebration of the encounter with God the Father.

Father Richard and I were so pleased with the responses of the children who prepared for their sacraments using CGS last year. I am excited to continue with your children this year, using this method and seeing the fruits of their work from last year

The Doctrinal Component

This portion of the program will be taught by myself and volunteer catechists in a classroom format using the CGS methodology. Many of the topics presented this year will provide direct preparation for the sacraments and will need to be made up if your child is absent that day. I will present more information on the CGS methodology at the Parent Meeting.

Sacramental Preparation Program

This component is taught by me, with assistance, through a series of retreat sessions, in the weeks immediately prior to First Communion. The children will also be making their First Confession during the session on May 2. In addition to meeting Diocesan requirements, this format develops an increased sense of community among the children and desire for these sacraments. **Attendance at all retreats is required for the reception of the sacraments.**

Parent Commitment

By Church tradition, initiation in sacraments is a community event – the joy of bringing the children into a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church is felt by both the immediate and Parish families. The initiation of children into these sacraments is the responsibility of the whole community. **Celebrating Mass as a family with our Parish community is strongly encouraged always, but especially during this preparation period.**

Retreat descriptions and schedule are included on the opposite page. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to joining you and your child during this special year in their journey of faith.

Yours In Christ,

Amy Donahue

Mass of Enrollment

Saturday, March 21, 2026; 4PM

Upper Church

The Children will be presented to the Parish, receiving the gift of the Word in the Gospels. As they proclaim their intention to prepare to join in the Eucharistic meal, each child will place his "sheep" at the feet of the Jesus, Our Good Shepherd.

First Session – Parent/Child

During your child's regular class time the week of April 5, 2026

Lower Church

These two sessions provide for time to contemplate, as a family, these most special encounters with Christ through the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. This session's topic will be a meditation of Jesus as the True Vine. Ideally, one parent should attend.

Second Session – Parent/Child

During your child's regular class time the week of April 12, 2026

Lower Church

The topic of this session will be meditations on the parables of the Found Sheep and the Forgiving Father. Ideally, one parent should attend.

Third Session – Child Only

During your child's regular class time the week of April 26, 2026

Lower Church

The topic of this session will be the Rite of Penance, as we begin our contemplation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Retreat Day

Saturday, May 2, 2026

9AM-11AM – Children only

Chapel Room, Lower Church

In this session, we will complete our contemplation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the children will make their First Confession. A snack will be served.

11AM-12PM with Parents

Lower Church

Last Meditation

The topic of the final meditation will be the Healing of the Centurion's Servant. We will end our day with the children receiving their First Communion cross. A short First Communion rehearsal will also be held, if necessary.

First Communion

Sunday, May 3, 2026; 1PM

Upper Church

Mass of Welcome

Sunday, May 10, 2026; 10AM

Upper Church

The children will be welcomed to our Parish Community's Eucharistic table by placing their name cards (from the Mass of Enrollment) into our Parish record box. The children will also be committed to our Blessed Mother's loving care by leading the parish in the May Crowning of the Mary.