**St. Oscar Romero Parish**



First Reconciliation

&

First Holy Communion

**Family Guide**

2023-2024

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**Important Dates to Remember**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Time** | **Location** | **Purpose** |
| March 14, 2024 | 7:00 p.m. | St. Patrick Church | First Reconciliation |
| March 14, 2024 |  | St. Patrick Church | Retreat Materials Due (Four Reflections and Banner) |

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**Introduction**

Soon your child will join your family and God’s family at the Lord’s Table for the first time. Christ gave us a precious gift when He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Through this gift, He remains with each person in a very intimate way. For this reason, the day of your child’s First Communion is an enormously important day in his or her life – and your life as well. Your child’s enthusiasm and joy can increase your own and visa-versa. And, that joy can affect the entire parish community.

First Communion is considered one of the holiest and most important occasions in a Catholic’s life. It means that the person has received the Sacrament of Eucharist, which is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. For the students in Grade 2, celebrations of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist will be celebrated in the Spring of the year at St. Oscar Romero Parish.

Sacramental Preparation at St. Oscar Romero consists of expectations for the children as well as their parents. The children’s expectations are as follows: regular attendance in the religious education classes (either Sunday, Monday, or HomeStudy), completion of the First Communion At-Home Retreat, First Reconciliation, and First Holy Communion. The parent’s expectations are as follows: attendance at the parent meeting and helping children complete the banner and the at-home retreat.

The best preparation parents can give their child is to practice and live the faith. One of the most important ways to do this is regular attendance at Mass. An integral part of our child’s faith formation is participation in the Sunday Liturgy. Talk with your child about Mass before you go and the appropriate moments in the actual celebration when you are in church together. Emphasize that the Mass is God’s family celebrating a sacred meal. While completing the religious classes is important for learning practical knowledge, faith should also be experienced. To be part of the parish family and to worship each Sunday is to be part of faith in action. Parents, as the first educators in the faith, it is expected that you will give your child these experiences so your child will be encouraged to practice his/her faith.

**First Reconciliation and First Eucharist Requirements**

* The child preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist must be registered in the St. Oscar Romero Religious Education Program (Sunday, Monday, or HomeStudy)
* Regular attendance in Faith Formation classes for Grades 1 and 2
* Baptismal Certificate (copy) by December 1, 2023
* Complete the First Communion Retreat materials by March 14, 2024 They may be submitted as soon as they are complete.
  + Two written reflections on the Gospel of John
  + Two written reflections on Sharing with Others
  + Review Examination of Conscience and the Act of Contrition (no written assignment)
  + Make banner – kit included – requirements are in this packet
* Weekly mass attendance is expected
* First Reconciliation on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Patrick Church

**The Role of the Parents**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “**Parents have the first responsibility for the education of children.** They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues.* Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2223).

You, as parents, are the most meaningful adult Christians in the life of your child. You show your love for your child and give witness to your faith when you share your convictions. In particular, your personal responses to God’s love show your child that Reconciliation and Eucharist are part of our daily lives. They are not events that only happen as part of one special celebration day; they are truths that exist at life’s very center.

Not only is the Church emphasizing your role as parents in your child’s religious education but emphasizing the responsibility of our whole parish to help you fulfill your role. To assist you in this responsibility, we will provide you with additional information, guidance, and the confidence you need through our parent meeting and liturgical celebrations.

**Mass Participation**

The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice, and for this reason the faithful are obligated to participate in the Mass on Sunday and other Holy Days of Obligation (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2180). The Church teaches that missing Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation is a sin. Moreover, in order for someone to feel a part of the parish community, he or she must be regularly attending liturgies with fellow parishioners.

**Liturgical Celebrations**

**First Reconciliation** will be celebrated on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in St. Patrick Church. Parents will be able to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation on this day as well immediately following the child.

**First Holy Communion Practice and Photos** First Communion practice will be virtual. You will receive a link to the practice video. Photos will be taken of each child receiving the Host for the first time. A group photo will follow the ceremony. If you would like additional photos, please contact Mirisciotti Photography (724-745-5160) to schedule on your own.

**First Holy Communion** will be held at all three churches in St. Oscar Romero Parish: Holy Rosary Church, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, and St. Patrick Church. The dates for First Communion will be pre-selected by the families through Sign-Up Genius and an email of date confirmation has been sent to families.

Holy Rosary Church, April 28, 2024 at noon Mass

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, May 5, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. Mass

St. Patrick Church, May 5, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. (Special Communion Mass)

*(At* ***Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches****, the children will sit with their families. Pews for the families will be assigned at random and located on First Communion Day. Pews will be marked with the child’s banners at church. Children should take their banners home with them AFTER the Mass where they receive their First Communion.)*

*(At* ***St. Patrick Church****, children will process in as a group and sit together. Family pews will be selected at the parent meetings in January. Each family will have one pew that will hold about 8-12 people. Banners will be on the pew that you selected for your family; children should take their banners home with them AFTER the Mass where they receive their First Communion.)*

**Banner**

Throughout your child’s preparation for the sacrament of the First Eucharist, the goal is to provide experiences of Unity and belonging. In preparation for the First Holy Communion, each child, with the help of parents at home, will make a banner. The completed banner will be hung in the church during First Communion. *The banner will be hung on your pew at Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches.* *At St. Patrick Church, banners will be hung throughout the church.* Kits for banners are included in this packet. If you wish to make your own banner in cross stitch or some other art form, the banners are to be 12” X 18”. The banners are due no later than March 14, 2024. ***Please put the child’s name on the front of the banner and write their first and last name on the back so they can be easily returned.***

**List of Prayers to Know for First Communion**

* The Sign of the Cross
* Our Father
* Hail Mary
* Glory Be
* Act of Contrition
* The Apostles’ Creed

**First Reconciliation Day – Thursday, March 14, 2024– 7:00 p.m.**

* A program will be held before First Reconciliation beginning at 7:00 p.m. (Parents and children should all attend)
* The dress code is church attire – please no jeans, warm-up suits, or sports uniforms. This is a Sacrament, and the children should be dressed appropriately.
* We ask that all cell phones be turned off. The Church should remain quiet creating an environment for those to pray, reflect, and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
* Spend time with your child and talk about what is a “sin” and why we need to confess that sin. In preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please review the following Examination of Conscience with your child.

**Examination of Conscience**

1. **I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.**
   1. Do I pray every day?
   2. Do I out my trust in superstitions, good luck charms, rather than God alone?
   3. Have I rejected any church teaching or denied that I was Catholic?
2. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
   1. Have you used the words “God” or “Jesus” to someone because you were mad?
   2. Have I used bad words or ugly or foul language?
   3. Have I wished evil on another?
3. **Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.**
   1. Have I missed Mass on Sunday?
   2. Do I pay attention during the liturgy?
   3. Do I make it hard on others to hear or pay attention?
   4. Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sunday?
   5. Do I make Sunday a day of prayer and rest?
4. **Honor your father and your mother.**
   1. Do I obey my parents?
   2. Have I mistreated them by what I say or what I do?
   3. Am I willing to help around the house or must I need to be nagged a hundred times?
   4. Do I try to get along with my brothers and sisters?
   5. Am I a tattletale or a bully?
   6. Do I give a good example, especially to my younger brothers and sisters?
   7. Do I obey others in authority like teachers, elderly people, baby-sitters, police?
5. **You shall not kill.** 
   1. Do I beat up others or hurt them?
   2. Do I say mean things, or make fun of others to hurt their feelings?
   3. Do I say mean things about others behind their backs?
   4. Have I stopped speaking to anyone?
   5. Do I encourage others to do bad things?
   6. Have I wished bad things happen to anyone?
6. **You shall not commit adultery.**
   1. Do I treat my body and other people’s bodies with respect?
   2. Do I look at television shows, movies, or pictures that are bad?
   3. Do I speak nicely to others?
7. **You shall not steal.**
   1. Have I taken things that were not mine from a store or another person?
   2. Have I ruined another person’s property for fun?
   3. Do I return things I borrow? In good condition?
8. **You shall not lie.**
   1. Am I honest in my schoolwork?
   2. Do I cheat or copy other people’s work?
   3. Do I tell lies to make myself look good?
   4. Do I tell lies to protect myself from punishment?
   5. Do I tell lies that make another person look bad or get them in trouble?
9. **You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.**
   1. Do I allow my parents to spend time with one another, or do I get jealous and want them to pay attention to only me?
   2. Do I get mad when I have to share my friends?
   3. Are there kids I will not play with or be mean to because they look different?
10. **You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.** 
    1. Am I jealous or envious of the things my friends have?
    2. Am I jealous because my friends can play sports better than I can?
    3. Am I thankful to God and my parents for what they have given me?
    4. Do I share the things I have with my family, friends, and poor people?

**The 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.

**First Communion Day**

* Practice will be virtual via video for Holy Rosary Church and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church. A link will be sent to you to review procedures.
* Practice for St. Patrick Church will be Thursday, May 2, 2024 beginning at 6:00 p.m. in St. Patrick Church. This is an in-person practice.
* The pews for the First Communion children will be in the front of the church on both sides at all three churches.
* The children will process in before the priest at all three churches.
* *Each child will sit with their families in the pew at Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches. Each family will have their own pew. First Communion students should sit on the aisle seat so they will proceed to the altar first. The parents and family may follow their child to the altar.*
* Pews will be assigned at random at Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches, and the family’s name will be on the pew when you arrive at church. The child’s banner will also be on the pew at Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches. Please take your banner with you AFTER Mass. Please arrive 30 minutes before Mass to locate your pew.
* Since First Communion will be held during regularly scheduled Masses at Holy Rosary and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Churches, children may have as many guests as they wish. Pews accommodate about 8-10 people. These will be the family members who will accompany the child to the altar to receive the Eucharist.
* Additional family members may sit anywhere in church during regularly scheduled Masses.
* *The children will be sitting in a group by themselves at St. Patrick Church. Family pews will be selected at the January/February meetings by the parents for St. Patrick Church. Pews will be selected by picking a pew number at random.* Since the Mass at St. Patrick Church is ONLY for First Communion children, each family will be allotted one pew, so we have enough pews for all the families. Each pew accommodates about 8-12 people.
* At St. Patrick Church, the children will receive their First Holy Communion first before any families are directed to go to Communion. Families will be directed by the ushers to go to Communion at St. Patrick Church.
* At St. Patrick Church, please refer to the diagram of children pews and family pews. There are some open pews that are not assigned. If St. Patrick Church families have additional guests attending First Holy Communion, these “open” pews will be available to guests at a first come first served basis.
* No photos are to be taken during the First Communion Mass. A professional photographer will be taking photos of the children as they receive the Sacrament.
* A group photo will be taken of the children following Mass.
* Photos will be permitted with the priests following the ceremony.
* What to wear for First Holy Communion:
  + **Boys**:
    - Boys are expected to wear black or navy pants with a matching suit jacket, dress shirt, long tie or bow tie along with dress shoes. White suits are also acceptable
  + **Girls**:
    - Girls are to wear white communion dresses that come to at least the knee with an optional veil or crown and white dress shoes
    - No spaghetti straps or gloves

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Dr. Cindi Fuselier, Coordinator of Religious Education K-6 St. Oscar Romero Parish

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