

August 2023

Dear Parents,



**ST. MARY'S  
PARISH**

*Winona, Minnesota*

We are writing to you today because you have a child who is about seven or eight years old. This is the traditional age at which a Catholic child goes to Confession and Holy Communion for the first time. We invite you and your child to prepare with us during the coming months for these sacraments. Preparation for First Reconciliation will occur this fall; preparation for First Eucharist will begin in January, with the celebration of First Eucharist taking place on the weekend of May 4 & 5, 2024.

Here at St. Mary's, we are using a process for preparing your child that involves learning together. YOU become the actual teacher of your child, but we guide you through every step. This is a memorable time of your child's life – and the memories you make during this preparation period will be cherished for a long time.

We know that households and families take many shapes today. Therefore,

- If you are a single parent, we invite you and your child to attend together.
- If you are a married couple, we invite both of you and your child to attend together.
- If one of you is not Catholic, we invite you both nonetheless, and we provide a lovely welcome and orientation for the one who is not Catholic.
- If you are Catholic but have not been active in parish life yourself lately, we welcome you! We have resources to help you get up to speed and help your child learn certain Catholic prayers and customs.
- If you are living in a separate or divorced situation, we invite you to decide whether both parents can be involved.

We hope we have covered all the bases here. The important thing for us is that you know we welcome you, regardless of your situation in life, and we will give you all the resources needed to really prepare your child well.

**The preparation sessions will be held at St. Mary's Parish in the Visitation Commons at the times listed on the back.** There is a total of nine preparation sessions (September through April) which both you and your child will attend, plus the celebration of the sacraments. These will be wonderful times!

You and your child will receive a helpful guide and workbook. With our leader assisting, you and your child will work through this text and then try a few lessons at home by yourselves. You will be amazed at how much you will enjoy this process!

Preparation sessions for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist will be held in the Visitation Commons with facilitator Marcy & Jeff Van Fossen. Sessions will be held from **5:30-6:30pm** on Wednesday evenings unless indicated below.

<b>Wednesday, September 13:</b>	Session One
<b>Sunday, September 17:</b>	Rite of Welcome (10:30 AM Mass)
<b>Wednesday, October 11:</b>	Session Two
<b>Wednesday, November 8:</b>	Session Three
<b>Wednesday, December 13:</b>	Session Four

**Families choose a Saturday in December or January:**  
Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

<b>Wednesday, January 10:</b>	Session Five
<b>Wednesday, February 7:</b>	Session Six
<b>Wednesday, March 13:</b>	Session Seven
<b>Wednesday, April 10:</b>	Session Eight
<b>Wednesday, April 24:</b>	First Eucharist Activity Night (5:00-7:00 PM)
<b>Friday, May 3:</b>	First Eucharist Pictures and Rehearsal (5:30 PM)
<b>May 4 &amp; 5:</b>	Celebration of the Sacrament of Eucharist at all Masses

Registration for participation in this sacramental preparation program can be found on the St. Mary's Parish website at [www.stmaryswinona.org/Sacraments/Holy Eucharist](http://www.stmaryswinona.org/Sacraments/Holy_Eucharist). **Look for the link (Sacrament Registration Form) to register.** There is a \$30.00 registration fee that will cover the cost of materials for the program.

**If your child was not baptized at St. Mary's Parish, please send a copy of their baptismal certificate to the Parish Office as soon as possible.**

Thank you for being part of our faith community. We look forward to walking with you as your child learns and grows in his or her faith.

With blessings and all good wishes,

Marcy & Jeff Van Fossen  
Family Coach/Facilitators

Julie Fitzgerald  
Director of Parish Life & Faith Formation  
St. Mary's Parish