Church of St. Mary Catholic Church

First Eucharist

PARENT HANDBOOK
Year 2: Immediate Preparation

Welcome

We are truly excited for the opportunity to support you in preparing your child as they receive the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the first time. Over the coming weeks, the children will learn about the awesome gift that Jesus gives to us; the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Jesus' true presence here on earth. In addition, the children will explore all parts of the Mass and will be introduced to the music, readings, and responses that will be a part of the Mass of First Eucharist. We look forward to continuing this Sacramental journey with your family.

Prayer for Children Preparing to Receive their First Communion

Lord Jesus Christ, bless the children coming forward to receive Holy Communion for the first time.

May that day be the step toward a life-long love of the Eucharist.

Give them a hunger for this sacred food so that they turn to You for comfort, guidance, and wisdom as they grow into full discipleship.

Thank you for their innocence and goodness.

May their hands, extended in anticipation of Your Body and Blood, inspire all of us to cherish this sacred Sacrament.

Amen.

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"Do this in memory of Me."

John 6:35

The Mass

For Catholics, one of the most important things we do is coming together to celebrate Mass. *Mass is the heart and soul of our worship of God.* It is the celebration that gives us the strength we need to live a Christian life. Because of its importance the Church places a serious obligation on all its members to take part in Mass each Sunday and on holy days.

The Eucharist: What We Believe

The Mass is a memorial of the sacrifice Jesus offered God the Father at the Last Supper. During that meal, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and told his followers, "Do this in memory of Me." Although the Eucharist is a mystery, we, as Catholics, accept on faith the fact that bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus because Jesus told us this is so. "The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine." The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; it is Jesus himself (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324, 1374). The Eucharist is Jesus' true presence here on earth. At Mass, we come together as a community, the Body of Christ, to worship and to receive His presence into ourselves. For a more in-depth exploration: The Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers, USCCB

Helpful Resources

To help explain the Eucharist to your child:
Busted Halo—Holy Eucharist
Holy Kids: Eucharist Series

Additional Resources for a Parent's refresher on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist:
Bishop Barron on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist
Busted Halo: Transformed in the Eucharist
Busted Halo: Advanced 201 Eucharist
Hallow: The Eucharist

The Mass in the Liturgical Year

Like the natural seasons, the Church has seasons too. They are called liturgical seasons. One of the clearest signs of these seasons is the changing liturgical colors. With each change of seasons, the Church changes the color of vestments (clothing worn by the priest, or celebrant, and cloths adorning the altar). The following colors are used:

Green is a symbol of hope and life. This is the color worn during ordinary time.

White is a sign of joy and celebration. This is the color worn during the seasons of Christmas and Easter, and for some designated Holy Days. This is also the color worn for Sacramental celebrations, such as Baptism, First Eucharist, Holy Orders and Marriage. It is also worn for funerals, in honor, memorial and celebration of a person's life in Christ.

Violet (Purple) represents penance and reflection. This color is used during the seasons of Lent and Advent. It is also seen during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Rose is the color of joy and the promise of light. We see this color only two times during the year, on the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday).

Red symbolizes the blood of Christ and martyrs of the Church, it also represents the Holy Spirit. The priest will wear red on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Pentecost. It is also worn for the Feast Days of martyrs, and for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

For additional information:

Liturgical Calendar, USCCB

2026 Liturgical Calendar, USCCB

"Take and eat for this is My Body. Then He took the cup and said, 'Drink it all of you, this is My Blood, which seals God's covenant."

Matthew 26: 26-28

The Mass in a Church Building

As Catholics, we gather as a community to celebrate the Mass. What began in the homes of the early Christians has evolved into the celebration in the beautiful physical structures of Catholic Churches all over the world. As you enter the Church of St. Mary look around you.

The Nave is the main space within the church where the congregation sits. The other rooms in the church are the Narthex, or "lobby" area, and the Sacristy where the clergy vest, items used for communion and the celebration of the Mass are kept.

The Sanctuary is the elevated space within the church where the Main Altar resides. The Altar is the large, high table where the Eucharist is celebrated. It is "dressed" with a white Altar Cloth, and may be adorned with the colors of the Liturgical season. A

Lectern (ambo) is the place where the readings are done, Gospel proclaimed, and the homily given. It is located to the left of the altar.

The Paschal Candle is the large, white candle by the Baptismal Font which contains Holy Water. Each Easter, a new candle is blessed and brought into the Church. The candle is lit during the Easter season, for Baptisms and for Funerals. Otherwise it remains unlit.

The Cross or Crucifix is placed near the altar and on the altar, to remind us of God's love and sacrifice for us.

The Tabernacle is a safe, locked vessel which holds a place of prominence near the altar, in our parish to the right of the front of the altar. This is where the consecrated hosts (Christ) are placed following communion. Christ is present when the Sanctuary Lamp, or red candle by the Tabernacle, is lit.

Preparing for the Mass

Just as you would prepare to host guests at a celebration with a meal in your home, preparations are made before each celebration of the Mass.

The Sacristan is the person who prepares the items needed for the celebration of the Mass. This includes:

- Lighting the **altar candles**.
- Preparing the table which holds the gifts (**ciborium with unconsecrated hosts & cruet of wine**) to be brought forward.
- Setting out the vessels that the priest uses for the Eucharist:
    - The **Chalice** to hold the wine that will become the Precious Blood.
    - The **Paten**, or plate, which holds the bread that will become the Body of Christ.
    - A **Corporal**, or "placemat" to collect any crumbs or spills.
    - A **Purificator**, a linen cloth which is used to wipe clean the Chalice and the Paten.

The **Priest** prepares by wearing special **Vestments**. The wearing of vestments arose at the same time the celebration of the Mass was moved into church buildings as a way for people to tell who the various ministers were. The vestments we see the most are:

- An **Alb** is the first garment placed on by the priest, and is long and white. This is also what is seen being worn by **Altar Servers.**
- The **Cinture** is the cord tied around the waist of an alb.
- The **Stole** is a narrow cloth, similar to a scarf, draped around the neck of the priest. It symbolizes the authority given by the church and sacredness of his role.
- The **Chasuble** is the outer garment, similar to a poncho, and will match the color of the liturgical seasons.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. We are encouraged to receive Communion frequently and devoutly. In order to be properly prepared to receive, one should not be conscious of a grave sin, and should have fasted for one hour prior. The best practice is to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation with enough frequency to have a clear heart and conscious when coming to receive our Lord in the Eucharist.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because of Your just punishment, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Your grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
Amen

Prayers to Know

Our Father

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be 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.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen Glory Be To The Father Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Preparing for the Mass

The guests also prepare to come to your home for a celebration. In the same way, each person coming to Mass should prepare and respect the holy place they are entering. Here are some ways you and your child can prepare:

- Review or read through the Gospel reading before going to Mass to help your child be familiar with the Gospel.

- When first entering the Church, stop and dip the fingers of your right hand in the Holy Water Font placed by each of the entrances, and then make the Sign of the Cross, as a reminder of your Baptism.

- As you choose a place to be sit during Mass, be aware of your child's perspective… the more they can see, the more engaged they will be.

- Before entering your pew, turn towards the Tabernacle and genuflect. This is a sign of reverence towards Christ, and is done by kneeling on one knee and making the Sign of the Cross.

- Once in your pew, take a moment to kneel and talk quietly with God. This also gives your mind and body a moment to transition from the noise of the world to the peace of the Mass.

- If there is time, take out the Roman Missal which contains the readings and parts of the Mass, and familiarize yourself and your child with what is about to happen and the readings you are about to hear. On the back of the Missal, you will find common Catholic prayers. Read some of these with your child each week at Mass.

Introductory Rites

- **Procession**. We stand as the priest-presider and other ministers enter the assembly. We sing a gathering song. The priest kisses the altar. He then goes to the chair where he presides over the celebration.
- **Greeting**. The priest leads us in praying the Sign of the Cross together. The priest greets us and we say, "And with your spirit."
- **Penitential Rite**. "I confess to Almighty God…" We admit our wrongdoings. We thank God for his mercy.
- **Gloria**. "Glory to God in the Highest" We praise God for all the good he has done for us (this is omitted during Advent and Lent).
- **Opening Prayer**. The priest leads us in praying the Opening Prayer. We respond, "Amen."

The Order of the Mass

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading. Read by lector usually from the Old Testament or from the Acts of the Apostles. "Thanks be to God"
- Responsorial Psalm. The cantor leads us in singing a psalm. This helps us think about what we heard in the first reading.
- Second Reading. The lector reads from the New Testament, but not from the four Gospels. Daily Mass usually omits this reading.
- Gospel Acclamation. "Alleluia!" The cantor sings it first and the congregation repeats. We stand to honor Christ present with us in the Gospel. (During Lent the word alleluia is omitted).
- Gospel. Taken from one of the four Gospels, it is read by a priest or deacon, never by a layperson.
- Homily. Delivered by priest or deacon, explaining the Scriptures and its application of what it means to us.
- Profession of Faith. "I believe in one God…" All join in this declaration of beliefs. We pray the Nicene Creed. • Prayer of the Faithful. "Lord, hear our prayer." Also known as General Intercessions. We are lead in praying for those in need.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

In this Sacrament, we become what we receive: the Body of Christ

We gather, We are fed, We are sent back into the world.

"I am the bread of life."

John 6:35

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- **Preparation of the Altar Gifts**. This is also offertory. We sit as the altar table is prepared, the collection is taken up, and the gifts of bread & wine are brought forward.
- Eucharistic **Prayer**. The priest invites us to join in praying the Church's great prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father. We stand, then kneel for this prayer. During this prayer the ordinary bread and ordinary wine, become the extraordinary body and blood of our Lord.
- **Communion Rite**. "Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." This part begins with the Our Father, followed by the Sign of Peace. After praying the Lamb of God, we receive the sacred body of Christ in the consecrated host, and have the option of receiving the precious blood.

"Go Forth the Mass is ended."

Concluding Rite

- **Greeting and Blessing**. "In the name of the Father…"
- **Dismissal**. "Thanks be to God!" We are sent forth to do good works, praising and blessing the Lord.
- **Recessional**. We stand as the altar servers; lectors and the priest leave the altar. Out of respect, we do not leave our pews until the priest has fully recessed out of the Nave.

The Order of Mass

Additional Information

Order of the Mass, USCCB
Parts of the Mass, USCCB
That Catholic Show: 001: Sit, Stand and Kneel
The How-To Book of the Mass, by Mike Dubruiel

Receiving Communion

This is how we receive the Body of Christ.

- Prepare your heart to welcome Jesus with folded hands.
- As the person before you is receiving the Body of Christ, ***bow in reverence to our Lord.***
- You can choose to **receive the Host in your hand**.
  - ◊ ***Extend your hands*** with palms facing up, dominant hand below the other hand.
  - ◊ When you hear the words, ***"The Body of Christ," answer, "Amen."***
  - ◊ After the Host is placed in your cupped hand ***reverently pick up the Host with the hand on the bottom (dominant hand) and place it in your mouth***. Consume the Host, prepare to receive the Blood of Christ or return to your seat with your hands folded.

- You can choose to **receive the Host on your tongue**.
  - ◊ After you answer "Amen," open your mouth and ***extend your tongue with your head held up***.
  - ◊ After the Host is placed on your tongue close your mouth and consume the Host. Prepare to receive the Blood of Christ or return to your seat with your hands folded.

This is how we receive the Blood of Christ.

- As the cup is extended towards you, when you hear the words, ***"The Blood of Christ." You reply, "Amen."***
- Take the cup ***with your own hands and reverently bring the cup to your mouth***.
- Take a small amount of the Blood of Christ and then carefully ***give the cup back using both hands***.

Busted Halo—Holy Eucharist: How to Receive

After Receiving Communion

Jesus is within you now. Kneel and quietly share whatever is on your heart with Him. Give thanks, ask for help or just quietly rejoice in his presence within you!

Remain kneeling, and sing the Communion song with your parish family. Watch as the Altar table is cleaned, and how the vessels are cared for. Watch for the **Priest or Deacon** to take the Body of Christ back to the **Tabernacle**. Once this has occurred, you may be seated until the final blessing.

Reception of Communion Fellow Christians and Non-Christians

As Catholics, we welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist, and pray that our common baptism and the Holy Spirit will draw us closer and dispel the divisions which separate us. Because we believe that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist, reception of this sacrament is discouraged among those who do not share in our faith in Jesus Christ, or those whom are members of churches not fully united in the Christian, catholic faith. We do ask, during this time of the Mass, that they offer their own prayers for peace and the unity of the human family.

(Code of Canon Law, canon 916 & 844)

Communion Prayer

My Jesus, I believe that You are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I long for You in my soul. Amen

Follow-up to Your Child's First Eucharist

The preparation is over and your child has now joined you at the Eucharistic table. So that your child's First Eucharist does not become a memory of a once only past event, you might find these suggestions helpful.

- **Go as a family to Mass each Sunday**. ***Make sure your child can see, hear and actively celebrate***. As a family participate in the life of the parish.
- Meal times are especially key to fostering the sense of being a "Eucharistic" people. **Say grace at meals.** ***Let your home and table be places where all are welcome and included.*** Special family occasions should be celebrated around the table with extended family members and friends.
- **Eucharist equals thanksgiving**. Encourage your child to be thankful for all they have and to be aware of those less fortunate than themselves.
- **Encourage your child to be faithful to prayer**. Share in his/her bedtime prayers.
- **Be the person you want your child to think you are**... be the example to let your child experience what it means to be "bread for others"—to be the Body of Christ in the world—through your day-to-day family living, your friendships, your kindness and service to others.

"We are His Body, living as one; our God is here!"

The Rite of

Attire

Young Ladies

- White dress is traditional
- White shoes are traditional
- White veil or floral headpiece (headwear is optional)
- ***Note: If gloves are worn, they must be removed before receiving the Eucharist.***

Young Gentlemen

- Dress slacks and shirt & tie
- Sports jacket or suit are traditional but not necessary
- Dress shoes

Pictures

Photographers from Tom Killoran Photography will be present to capture this blessed moment. All photographs will be made available for purchase online. Once the photographs are available our office will send out the link for your convenience.

First Communion Gifts

Marytown Gift Shop in Mundelein, Divine Word Missionaries Religious Gift Shop in Northbrook, and Holy Family Catholic Bookstore in Pleasant Prairie (Wisconsin) all carry lovely items for First Holy Communion. There are also a number of Etsy sites that carry customizable items.

Books with Themes of Mass/Sacraments/Communion

The Weight of the Mass by Josephine Nobisso
32 Days: A Story of Faith and Courage by Ellen Lucey
The Tale of Three Trees by Angela Elwell Hunt
The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis

Important Dates

First Eucharist Retreats*

† Saturday April 11th, 9am-11:30am (Last Names A-M)
† Saturday, April 11th, 1pm-3:30pm (Last Names N-Z)
Both retreats will be held at the UGC Cafeteria and Gym

Banners Due: April 11th, please bring to retreat.

Rehearsals

† Wednesday, April 21st, 4:30pm-5:30pm (Last Names A-M)
† Thursday, April 23rd, 4:30pm-5:30pm (Last Names N-Z)

Celebration of First Eucharist

Saturday – April 25, 2026
Church of St. Mary

† 10:30am (Last Names beginning with A through M)
† 1:00pm (Last Names beginning with N through Z)

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