

First Communion



Hello families,

We hope the following will be helpful to you as you continue to prepare for First Communion. Generally these are the practical highlights for the next few weeks:

- ⇒ Each child must attend his/her assigned practice with a parent or other adult
- ⇒ Banners should be brought to the practice
- ⇒ Families must arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the Mass

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the practice? Do parents need to attend?

Practices are in the Church and at least one parent or adult needs to attend with each child without exception. During the practice, we will walk through the Mass, have children practice receiving, and have the children practice their meditation song. Please see our web site here for a recording of the song as well as a guide to the signs for the song, if children would like to practice at home: <https://parishofsacredheart.org/first-communion-and-first-reconciliation>

At the practice, you will also receive your family's pew assignment. Your banner will be hanging on your pew for your child's Mass.

Do we need to bring anything to the practice or the Mass?

Parents should bring their child's banner to the practice (see additional banner information on the next page). You do not need to bring anything to the Mass itself. We will place the banners on your assigned pew. *If your banner needs some minor repair such as a new hanger (string or ribbon), please bring it to the practice anyway and we will be happy to fix it!

Can we take pictures/video during First Communion?

We welcome families to take pictures before or after the Masses. However, no pictures or videos are to be taken during the Mass, which begins when the children process in, and ends after the end of the sending forth hymn. This is to preserve the sacred nature of the Mass. *If you are hiring a personal photographer to take pictures, you must contact the office in advance so we can arrange for a suitable time for this to take place.*

We encourage families to take pictures out in front of the church as well, which provides a beautiful “backdrop” to First Communion pictures. Also Father John is very happy to be in pictures after the Mass, so please feel free to ask him! 😊

We ask that you pass on to any family or friends attending Mass with us the above photography guidelines.

This year, we are also offering parents the opportunity to take pictures on a day ahead of the Mass. Please email Mrs. Donohue at jdonohue@parishofsacredheart.org if you are interested in this option.

What’s the banner?

Each family makes a banner for the pew, which must be brought to the First Communion practice that takes place the Monday before the Mass. These banners are very simple and can be made with materials found at large retailers and craft stores. Please see our web site for detailed information and instructions and patterns (<https://parishofsacredheart.org/first-communion-banner>). If you choose to order a banner kit, please note that you must cut down the banner to fit the sizes indicated in our guidelines. *Also if you have a banner from an older sibling, you are welcomed to “recycle” it!

Will the children have a chance to try the host and wine?

Yes. At our First Communion practices, children will practice receiving with unconsecrated hosts and wine. We do this at the practice because a parent has to attend with each child, and it will be up to the child and family with regard to whether or not he/she receives the Precious Blood (wine at practice).

Also please let us know in advance of any food allergies you think might be an issue for your child with regard to receiving Communion. Please note that we do have low gluten hosts for any child or other person receiving during the Mass; if this is the case for your child or any Catholic attending the Mass with you that day, please let us know in advance.

Do children need to wear white?

No! While some boys wear white suits and many girls wear white dresses, this is not a requirement. Often boys dress in navy blue, gray, etc., and some of the girls opt for a dress they wore at Easter, for example. Girls are not required to wear veils.

We do ask that children do not hold rosaries, Bibles, flowers etc. while in the pew or going up for Communion, as we have found this can create a distraction for them during the Mass.

Is there accommodation for special seating (wheelchairs for example) at the Mass?

We are happy to make arrangements to accommodate a person who requires special seating; please let us know in advance so we can make any changes to our seating prior to the Mass.

What time do we have to get there?

At least half hour in advance. When you arrive, please have your child sit in the pew with you. At some point before we begin, we will ask you to bring him/her downstairs where catechists will be there to line them up for our processional, which takes place right before the Mass begins.

How many people can we bring?

Pews seat roughly 16, and you get your own pew. There is also “overflow seating” near the altar, and limited seating in the back of the church.

What if we need to change our Communion date?

***Please note that at this point, making scheduling changes is very difficult.** It may seem like it would be easy to switch dates, but from a planning perspective, it is typically more complicated than it may seem. If there is a reason you absolutely need to make a change, please let Mrs. Donohue know as soon as possible. Also please keep in mind that families do have the option of children making First Communion at a regular Sunday Mass.

How long is the Mass?

About an hour

How are the children prepared for First Communion?

As with First Reconciliation, we prepare the children through the classroom and the retreat they attended. However, the most important way children prepare for the sacrament is by attending Mass regularly with the family. The Mass is central to everything we believe and do as Catholics, and within the context of First Communion in particular, the experience of regular Mass attendance is absolutely essential to the child's having a true understanding of the sacrament. It is not possible for the classroom to provide compensation for what is lost by not attending Mass.