

Parish of St. Thomas More

St. Thomas More Church



Our Lady of Mercy Church



*Guidelines for
First Reconciliation*

First Eucharist

2012

FIRST RECONCILIATION

The initiation of children into the sacramental life of the Church is primarily the responsibility and concern of parents. In other words, parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

In baptism, parents accept the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the Faith and to make it “their constant care.” As stated in the Rite of Baptism, parents are to see that *“the divine life which God gives them [their children] is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts.”* Although the child has reached the age of reason at the time of preparation for First Reconciliation, they have not yet been fully initiated. They lack the strength to be an official witness and disciple of Jesus Christ. Parents must assist their child in the life of holiness.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is also known as “Confession” or “Penance”, is a Sacrament of healing.

Our heavenly Father is a loving, caring and merciful God who loves us very much. He loves us so much that He allowed His only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die on the Cross so that we could have everlasting life.

He loves us so much that He gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He knows that we are not perfect and that at times we make wrong choices and commit sin. Reconciliation is the Sacrament in which we admit we have sinned and ask for and receive God’s forgiveness. Through this Sacrament we receive spiritual healing and are reunited with God.

Please note: **First Reconciliation is a MANDATORY prerequisite for First Eucharist (Communion).**

Please work with your child and make sure that they know the procedure for proper reception of the Sacrament:

- ✠ Go to the priest and begin with **the Sign of the Cross** (Say: *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*).
- ✠ Then say: *“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession.”*
- ✠ Then confess all sins. (This should be well thought out before coming to the Sacrament)!
- ✠ After telling all sins, say: *“That is all, Father, I am sorry for my sins.”*
- ✠ Next listen to the priest for your penance (this could be the Our Father and/or the Hail Mary... two prayers that your child should know).
- ✠ Normally the **Act of Contrition** would be prayed at this time, but at First Reconciliation it will be said as a group before individual confessions. Your child should still know it for future reception of the Sacrament.

*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. Amen.*

- ✠ Do the penance the priest assigns before leaving Church.

Once your child has received the Sacrament, you may depart in silence. However, it is suggested that parents also

receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, thereby setting a good example for their children.

First Reconciliation is not a “family moment”. It is a private time between your child, our Lord, and the priest. There should be no picture taking, video taping, or talking during the service. If you must talk, leave the Church and do it elsewhere! Cell phones are to be silenced.

One final note: First Reconciliation is exactly what it implies... the first time one receives the Sacrament. The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be received AT LEAST once a year by all Catholics as part of their “Easter duty”. A good practice is to receive the Sacrament during the Advent and Lenten seasons as well as at other times when it is needed.

FIRST EUCHARIST

~ TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW ~

Real Presence – The Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine – the glorified Christ who rose from the dead after dying for our sins. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the “***Real Presence***” of Christ in the **Eucharist**. Christ is present everywhere as God, through His knowledge, power and essence. Christ is present spiritually in those who are in the state of grace. But in His glorified human body, Jesus Christ is present only in two places: at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and in the ***Holy Eucharist*** here on earth. The “***Real Presence***” is the term referring to Christ’s actual presence in the elements of the bread and wine that have been transubstantiated.

Transubstantiation – The teaching that during the Mass, at the consecration, the elements of the Eucharist, bread and wine, are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. They are no longer bread and wine, but retain their appearance as bread and wine.

Tabernacle - The receptacle that serves as a place for the reservation of the ***Blessed Sacrament***. In our Church it is located in the center of the *sanctuary* along the back wall.

Sanctuary Light – A wax or oil burning lamp that burns constantly near the tabernacle, wherever the ***Blessed Sacrament*** is reserved, as a sign of honor shown to the Lord.

Sanctuary – That space at the front of the Church within which most of the action of the Mass takes place. **Sanctuary** means “Holy Place”. It is in the sanctuary we find the *ambo (pulpit), celebrant’s chair, main altar, tabernacle and sanctuary light.*

Ambo (Pulpit) - This is the place where the readings are done, Gospel proclaimed, homily given, and intercessions prayed.

Celebrant’s Chair – The central chair used by the priest.

Main Altar – The large high table located in the sanctuary. The liturgy of Eucharist takes place on the main altar. At times it is referred to as the Lord’s table around which the assembly gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. The altar represents Christ, the Lamb of God, who gave His life for us. The altar is always to be treated with respect.

~ PROPER CHURCH ETIQUETTE ~

- ✠ Upon entering the Church, shut off all cell phones and other electronic devices and terminate all conversations. Jesus is truly present in our tabernacle and reverent silence is expected.

- ✠ Bless yourself with **holy water**. At the entrance of the church, there is a receptacle containing holy water. The faithful dip their fingers into the font and bless themselves by making the sign of the cross. At the same time you may silently say, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” This symbolic gesture signifies the renewal of one’s baptismal commitment.

- ✠ Before entering a pew, pause while facing the tabernacle and bend the right knee all the way to the floor, then rise up again. This is called **genuflecting**. This gesture is an appropriate sign of respect for the presence of our Lord in the tabernacle. Those who have difficulty genuflecting may make a **profound bow** (a bow from the waist) instead.

- ✠ When Catholics first enter the pew, they kneel and pray silently. Chatting may be the norm in a theater or meeting hall, but not in a Catholic Church. There should be a reverent silence in preparation for the Sacred Liturgy.

- ✠ Enter into the celebration appropriately. Sing with the congregation. Listen attentively to the prayers, Scripture readings, and homily.

WHO MAY RECEIVE COMMUNION?

In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive without prior sacramental confession.

For all practical purposes, non-Catholics are excluded from taking Communion at a Catholic Church, because reception of the Eucharist (the Real Presence) by Christians not fully united with us would imply oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must pray.

Catholics who invite non-Catholics to Mass have an obligation to clarify this policy with their guests prior to Communion, so that no uncomfortable situations arise suddenly during the time of reception.

Those who cannot, or for some reason do not care to receive Communion simply remain seated in the pew while others go forward.

- ✠ If you go up to communion, walk with faith and devotion because you are to receive our Lord.
- ✠ Receive on the tongue or in the hand. If you are right handed and receive in the hand, open your left hand on top of your right and wait for the priest or deacon to place the host on your palm. When he says: “*The body of Christ*”, respond “Amen”. Do not grab the host from the priest or deacon. Consume the host immediately!
- ✠ When you return to your pew, say a prayer of thanksgiving. You have a choice to kneel or sit in quiet prayer, talking to the Lord of your love for Him, and asking His help in your life and life of your loved ones.
- ✠ After the final blessing is given and the priest has processed out, then the Mass is concluded. You should genuflect to the tabernacle and leave the Church continuing to be grateful for the graces you have received.
- ✠ Finally, live your faith as a Catholic and let it be visible in your life. You must not leave the Lord in Church, but allow Him to accompany you in the joys and challenges you and your loved ones face.

INFORMATION FOR FIRST EUCHARIST FAMILIES

- 1.) Children will gather in Petri Hall at 1:30 PM.
- 2.) Children will process into Church with their teacher and sit with their class.
- 3.) Please park in designated parking spaces only. Do not block pathways or park in front of the main entrance. Please do not park on the grass.
- 4.) Arriving before 12:45 PM is not a good idea. The 11:30 AM Mass will still be in progress or letting out and parking will be difficult if not impossible. Plan to arrive between 1:00 PM – 1:30 PM.
- 5.) Children will receive Communion before the rest of the parish community. They will receive Holy Communion in the form of the consecrated host (the body of Christ).

Please Note the Catholic teaching on the forms of Holy Communion as set forth by the Ecumenical Council of Trent: **The Catholic faith teaches that Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received under one species, and consequently that as far as the effects are concerned, those who receive under one species are not deprived of any of the grace that is necessary for salvation.**

Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is wholly present under the appearance either of bread or of wine in the Eucharist. Furthermore, Christ is wholly present in any fragment of the consecrated Host or in any drop of the Precious Blood.

- 6.) NO professional photographers or videographers are permitted. **You may only take pictures/video from your seat. PASS THIS INFORMATION ON TO YOUR GUESTS !!!**

- 7.) You will be able to take pictures after Mass. **PLEASE STAY OUT OF THE SANCTUARY !**
- 8.) Your child's First Eucharist Certificate will be handed out in Petri Hall after Mass.
- 9.) The following are a few suggestions of appropriate clothing:

BOYS – A suit, sport jacket and slacks, or shirt and slacks. NO jeans or sneakers please.
GIRLS – A dress (white or pastel), or any other appropriate Sunday clothing.
- 10.) Gloves, boutonnieres and armbands are NOT to be worn.
- 11.) Each family will be provided with six (6) tickets for the date of their child's First Eucharist Mass. If you have more than one child receiving First Eucharist you will be provided with an additional four (4) tickets. If you are going to use someone else's extra tickets, **THEY MUST BE FOR THE SAME DATE**. Each ticket is only allowed to be used on the date that is printed on it. Tickets will be handed out at First Eucharist rehearsals.
- 12.) No child may carry anything, including flowers, in their hands when receiving the Sacred Body of Christ in Holy Communion.
- 13.) Please be sure your children have a light snack two hours before Communion.