

January Parents Meeting for
First Penance and First Holy Communion 2026

First Holy Communion

The Class Assignments for First Holy Communion Masses and Rehearsals are as follows:

Group 1—April 25th, 10:00am Mass
Rehearsal – Tuesday, April 21st, 6:00pm

2A – Mrs. Susan Cummings/Mrs. Amira Khater

2B - Mrs. Linda Price/Mrs. Jamie Sears

2MA - Mrs. Aarin Wiltz/Mrs. Lien Ngo

2MB – Miss Francesca Moore/Mrs. Nina Gabriel

Group 2—April 25th, 2:00pm Mass
Rehearsal – Thursday, April 23rd, 6:00pm

2ME – Mrs. Biggio/Miss Ayiera Odenyo

2TA – Mrs. Stephanie Konold/Deacon Paul Konold

2WA – Mrs. Maureen Usle/Mrs. Lien Ngo

MSP1 – Mrs. Myriam Perez/Miss Lucy Evich

MSP2 - Mrs. Cindy Stalcup

SP1 – Mr. Rob Sommer

Home Schoolers

Mass Assignments: Due to the number of students receiving First Communion, and the reduced number of Masses, it is imperative that you arrange your schedule to work with the time your child has been assigned for their First Communion Mass. This Sacrament is a very important moment in their lives, and needs to take priority over other events.

Rehearsal Information – EVERY STUDENT MUST ATTEND REHEARSAL!

There will be only one rehearsal for each of the First Communion Masses.

Rehearsals will start in the church vestibule. Please drop your child off on time on the evening of their Rehearsal. Their teachers and aides will meet them there. The children may be picked up at church at the end of the rehearsal, which will last about 60-75 minutes. If you wish to stay for the rehearsal, you are welcome to do so, but must sit quietly in the back pews of the church.

On the evening of Rehearsal, those students designated as Gift Bearers and Petition Readers will have a final opportunity to practice. **If any of these children are late or absent from rehearsal, another child will be selected to take their place!**

First Penance

The children will be going to Confession for the first time the week of March 9-11 during class time; both School and Religious Education. Parents are normally not permitted in the Church during these times, as we have found that it affects the children's comfort level.

If you would prefer to be with your child during First Penance, you may take them to any of the normally scheduled parish Confession times, and then contact the RE Office letting us know that they have received the Sacrament.

Questions? Please contact the RE Office at 703-729-3714, or at reoffice@sainttheresaparish.com.

First Holy Communion Checklist for Parents

1. **Please take your child to Mass every Sunday.** It might be helpful to sit close to the front and share with them the significance of the sacred actions taking place on the altar.
2. **Dress Code** is as follows:
Girls: White dress, modest and suitable for Mass. White veil (flowers and ribbons are fine, but must have a veil attached). Gloves may be worn, but purses and/or prayer books may not be carried into Mass. **No strapless dresses, low necklines, short hemlines, bare backs, or bare shoulders (no spaghetti straps), please.** White dress shoes.
Boys: Dark jacket, dress pants (dark or khaki), white shirt, tie (colored or white). White suits are acceptable. Dress shoes.
3. Catholic First Holy Communion merchandise website - <https://shop.catholicsupply.com/fc>
4. Within the next few months, your child will be receiving a copy of the *St. Joseph First Communion Catechism* to further enrich their understanding of the basics. Please be sure to read this with your child.
5. Support your child's efforts to learn and memorize all three verses of their First Holy Communion song "O Jesus, We Adore Thee." Song sheets will be passed out in class.
6. Rehearsal is mandatory and specific to the Mass for which your child is scheduled. Please bring your child to the Church on the day and time assigned to your child. A reminder email will be sent.
7. **Arrival on the day of First Communion** – Please arrive no later than 9:00 am for the 10:00am Mass or 1:00pm for the 2:00pm Mass. Students must report to their designated prep rooms in the Elementary wing of the school by these times. Once you drop your child off at their room, please head directly to the Church to find your seats.
8. **Photos**

Individual portraits – These will be available from 7:30am-9:00am or 11:30am-1:00pm, in the Zelli Martin Conference Room in the Admin Building.

Candid shots – These photos of the students at the moment they receive their First Communion will be taken by Victor O'Neil Studios once again, and will be made available to parents as a gift from the parish.

Class photos - Individual teachers may request that their students arrive earlier in order to coordinate a class photo prior to the Mass, or they may arrange to do so following the Mass. Please check with your child's teacher for details.

Large group photo - A large group photo of all students receiving First Communion will take place at the end of each Mass. After the final hymn, students will be lined up in front of the altar for this photo. Once the photo is taken, students will be escorted back to their prep rooms where they will receive their First Communion Certificates, and then be picked up by their parents.

9. Please observe the following guidelines for respecting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, children making their First Holy Communion, and each other as we pray for and share this beautiful moment with the children.
 - A. While in Church, please observe a respectful silence in the Presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament.
 - B. Parents and guests are asked to remain seated in their pews during the Mass.
 - C. Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices while in the Church.
 - D. No cameras, video equipment or picture-taking are permitted during Mass!
 - E. During the First Holy Communicants' reception of the Sacrament, no one may stand in the aisles.
 - F. After Mass and the final Large group photo, please report to the classrooms to pick up your child.
 - G. Before leaving, be sure your child has a white envelope that contains their First Holy Communion certificate with their name spelled correctly.
 - H. Families are welcomed to take pictures in Church with the Priests following Mass.

Reflections on Penance and Holy Communion

From Scripture

[Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." **John 20:21-23**

The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **James 5:15-16**

[Jesus addressed the people, saying] "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." **John 6:48-58**

From the Catechism

2041 The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:

2042 The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principal liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

From the Saints

In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance. - *St. Thomas Aquinas*

"Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love... Receive Communion often, very often...there you have the sole remedy, if you want to be cured. Jesus has not put this attraction in your heart for nothing...The guest of our soul knows our misery; He comes to find an empty tent within us - that is all He asks." - *St. Therese of Lisieux*