

FIRST COMMUNION CELEBRATIONS DURING THE EASTER SEASON 2018

First Holy Communion is a step into greater initiation within our church. It is one of the Church's sacraments of initiation, along with Baptism and Confirmation. These very special sacraments of initiation are best celebrated within the regular parish community because each person's initiation is into the *whole* Church. First Eucharist is received at Communion by and with the whole Church gathered in community.

For our St. Regis Catholic Parish community, families are encouraged to celebrate their child's First Eucharist as a family, at one of the regularly scheduled weekend liturgies during the Easter season. This allows for many Mass choices so that all family, friends, etc., circumstances can be accommodated. It allows for a family to invite not just a few people to share in this joyous occasion but as many as they wish to invite. We focus on making these celebrations personal, parish community and family-centered, and truly reflective of the Church's desire that First Eucharist be celebrated by the whole community as a sacrament of initiation.

During the Easter season 2018, the following dates & times are available for First Communion celebrations:

Sunday, April 15 at 10am Mass	Sunday, April 15 at 12noon Mass	<i>Saturday, April 21 at 4:30pm Mass*</i>
Sunday, April 29 at 10am Mass	Sunday, April 29 at 12noon Mass	Sunday, May 6 at 12noon Mass
Saturday, May 12 at 4:30pm Mass	Sunday, May 13 at 10am Mass	Saturday, May 19 at 4:30pm Mass

**Some spots reserved at this Mass for First Communion families who also have a teen receiving the sacrament of Confirmation on 4/22/2018 at 12:00noon Mass.*

If you prefer a Sunday 8:00 Mass, this can also can be arranged. Families are invited look at their schedules and plan a dinner, breakfast, lunch or open house after the Mass they choose, as a way to extend the celebration—whatever best fits their schedules.

These family-centered First Eucharist celebrations, allow the parish community to focus on each child as they take this important step in deepening their initiation into the Church. The children are able to have all their family, relatives, and friends around them rather than just a few. They are seated with their families rather than having the family members seated in another part of the Church. They are still invited to “dress up” for the occasion. There are fewer children however at any one celebration so we are able to draw more personal attention to each student's special day. We will include a petition with each of their names at the General Intercessions of that Mass, as well as invite each of them to be part of the Opening Entrance Procession and Presentation of the Offertory Gifts. After Mass, families are able to take pictures around the altar without being pressured by a hundred other cameras!

We want to do everything we can to help your child experience First Eucharist as an exciting and awesome sacrament for them. It connects your child to the presence of Jesus Christ in a very special way and it allows them to experience yet another step of deeper commitment to the Catholic Christian way of life.

QUESTIONS:

1) When do we have to turn in our choices for the family First Eucharist and when will we know that the time and date is confirmed? You can begin turning in registration forms for any particular Mass beginning on **October 23, 2017**. All forms are to be sent to the parish office, attention Sarah Hogan. Other than for exceptional circumstances, the requests will be honored by the order in which we receive them. The latest date for returning your registration / date selection form is **February 12, 2018**. We will organize the requests and contact you as soon as possible to confirm your child's specific date and Mass time.

2) What if more than one family requests a particular Mass time and date? There is not a "one child per Mass" rule, but we do want to be able to focus on each child in a personal way. For that reason we will accept **up to 8** First Eucharist children and their families at a given liturgy, and will do our best to accommodate everyone's choices. With several dates and liturgies to choose from throughout the Easter season, hopefully we will not have to close any liturgy from additional students and families. However, you will see that we are asking you to fill out a form, which asks for a "first choice" as well as a "second choice". We will use the second choice only if a particular Mass and date is overwhelmed as a first choice request. If you are planning a joint First Eucharist celebration with a relative, be sure that you let us know who that is on the form.

3) What if my child gets sick or an emergency happens that makes the original date impossible to keep. Emergencies are an inevitable part of life. If one arises, we will adapt and make sure your child is able to celebrate on another date that works for the whole family. We will do our best to have it work smoothly!

4) How will preparation for First Eucharist take place? Your child will be learning about the Mass through their school, monthly online, or weekly Faith Formation classes. As a sacrament of the Church there are additional times for gathering and preparing specifically for the sacrament. The Archdiocese of Detroit requires that a child be in their second year of Faith Formation so that the child understands that this is not a focus on one event or day but part faith education and formation, especially in preparation for sacraments is part of a life-long formation in the faith of the Church. Here at St. Regis, in addition to the regular Faith Formation, there will be gatherings for each student and one parent in January and February, a Saturday morning retreat day in March, along with a Sunday enrollment Mass for candidates preparing to receive the Eucharist in March. Please see the calendar below for specific dates and times. These are all required as part of your child's full preparation for First Eucharist.

5) Does my child have to celebrate First Reconciliation before they can receive First Eucharist? The Church's guidelines strongly encourage that your child be part of a First Reconciliation preparation program and celebrate that sacrament sometime before First Eucharist. Is it absolutely required? No. The only persons absolutely required to go to confession are people who have committed serious sin; your child is not capable of that are their age. However, the Church also knows the value of periodic celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and would like your child, indeed all Catholics, to build a pattern of forgiveness and sacramental reconciliation into their lives. Beginning at an early age and building upon that experience is one way to encourage this life-long virtue. All children will learn about the sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) in their Faith Formation sessions and at St. Regis School, as well as how to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation in general. For those who believe their child is ready for that sacrament (knows the difference between what is a sin and what is not a sin) then we have an additional separate preparation process for First Reconciliation which takes place in the fall.

6) How do we "reserve" a particular date and time for my child's First Eucharist? In order to plan properly for all the celebrations, we need to know no later than **February 9, 2017** what Mass date and time you are choosing for your child's First Eucharist. **A response sheet is included for you to fill out and can be turned to Parish Office not before Monday, October 23, 2017.** Please be sure to indicate the number of guests you expect and whether you need special seating arrangements.

7) What is the calendar of dates for meetings and preparation for First Eucharist? Please mark the following dates in your calendars; *all gatherings are for the First Communion student and one parent.*

January 17 from 6:30-7:30 PM in the Church

February 7 from 6:30-7:30 PM in the Church

March 3 from 9:30-1:30 PM in the Father Shields Club Room and Gym; lunch will be provided.

March 18 at 10:00 or 12:00 Mass, Enrollment Blessing and invite our community to pray for the students.

May the peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you now and always,

Fr. David A. Buersmeyer
Pastor

Sarah Hogan
Director of Evangelization and Catechesis