

April 17, 2018

Dear Parents:

This letter is meant to give you some additional information to the letter, mailed to you in January. First Communion is Sunday, April 29, at 1:00 PM with the Retreat with Practice on Thursday, April 26, from 8:15 AM to 2:30 PM. May Crowning will be held on May 13 before the 10:30 AM Mass.

Before Wednesday, April 25—If your child attends one of the public schools and you are hoping to use your child's school busing to transport your child to St. Mary's Church and back home again or back to your child's school, you must call your child's school to request it and to make arrangements. I cannot make those arrangements for you. I cannot possibly know all the bus routes. I also do not have the authority to send your child on any bus. You must make the arrangements yourself through your school. Otherwise, you will need to make whatever other arrangements are necessary to transport your child to St. Mary's Church and back home.

Wednesday, April 25---A letter of request for an excused absence must be given to your child's school unless your child attends St. Mary's School.

If your child has made a First Communion banner, please bring it to School this morning or to SOR this evening. Remember that the top of the banner should not be sewn shut nor sewn hanging on a rod.

Thursday, April 26----- The Retreat/Practice begins at 8:15 AM and will end at 2:30 PM. The School children will keep their regular times for the beginning of school and for dismissal. The School children will take care of their morning business details in their classroom, and the SOR children will meet in the gym at 8:15 AM to take care of their details. Then the two classes will join.

If your SOR child is riding a school bus home or back to your child's school, we need to know which bus, so we can make certain your child is on the correct bus at the end of the day. Please write down this information in a letter with your child's name at the top to be turned in this morning.

If you are picking up your SOR child, you may park in the Jennings Road parking lot and enter the building to come to the gym or you may drive up to the bell tower. Your child will not be sent out of the building except at the bell tower for drive-up pick-up. Please let us know in the letter how your child will be picked up.

Lunch costs \$2.60 and milk alone is 50 cents. Lunch money should be brought the morning of the Retreat/Practice. The planned menu is as follows:

- *chicken patty on bun
- green beans
- peaches
- milk

*Your child may substitute the chicken patty on bun with a peanut butter sandwich or salad. The salad is an ample salad, but the salad is the entire meal. If a substitution is desired, SOR children should include this in their letter.

Of course, your child may also pack a lunch. Please make sure the lunch bag is labeled.

There is no plan in place to provide lunch for children, who do not have money or have not packed. Since St. Mary's School cafeteria operates under the supervision of the State, charges are not allowed, and the cafeteria cannot accept the free or reduced lunch arrangements provided to some children in other schools. That program is arranged for children through their own school. Be assured, however, that no child will go hungry if a lunch is truly forgotten.

Part of our Retreat/Practice involves the assigned seating of the children during Mass. The children will be seated as one class and according to whatever responsibility they have in the Mass. In other words, if your child is a gift bearer, we try to have the gift bearers seated in the same area, at the ends of the pews or in the same pew. If your child is reading one of the General Intercessions, your child will be grouped with other children for the General Intercessions. At the bottom of this letter, I have indicated your child's responsibility and on which side of the church your child will sit. If your child is a reader, a copy of the reading part will be attached.

It is very important that your child practice his or her reading part before the practice. Keep in mind that good readers sometimes read too quickly, so help your child read at a slower pace and encourage them to read loudly and distinctly. Your child should not bring the copy of the reading part to the practice. Please keep it at home to practice there.

Our photographer is Mr. Doug Heckler.

During Mass, Mr. Heckler will take a side photo of each child as he or she receives Communion. Although each child's photo is taken, purchase is not required. If you want this photo, indicate this on the envelope, which will be sent home with your child at the end of the Retreat/Practice day. The group photo will be taken immediately after the First Communion Mass. Everyone is part of the group photo, but purchase is, once again, not required.

Sweaters, boleros, shrugs, etc., are not to be removed for the group photo. They may be removed for individual photos.

An individual photo after Mass may be taken of your child alone or it may include parents or godparents, if you like. There is only one individual photo of each child. If this is a photo you would like, please indicate this on the envelope.

Bring your photo envelope to the gym before Mass.

A form is enclosed with a separate letter, inviting your child to participate in May Crowning before the 10:30 AM Mass on Sunday, May 13. The completed form can be mailed to the Religious Education Office, taken to SOR or School, or taken to the Retreat/Practice; however, it should be turned in to the Religious Education Office by May 4.

Sunday, April 29----- **Your child should be in the gym for line-up for First Communion no later than 12:45 PM.** That means that all restroom visits have been finished and the children are ready to line-up.

Turn in your photo envelope to Mrs. Freewalt or to your Catechist or Teacher.

There will be no pews reserved for parents. You may sit anywhere you wish in the church except for the pews and spaces marked as reserved. The choir loft is reserved for videographers only.

During Mass, photos may be taken from the pews with no flash. No photos may be taken from the aisles or in front of or behind the altar, etc. Please mention this to your friends and relatives. Actions by Mass attendees at the reception of sacraments in the past have brought up the question, more than a few times, as to whether or not photo taking should be allowed at all. Some parishes in our own diocese and some other dioceses do not allow photos to be taken during Mass—even without flash. We want to keep the opportunity to take photos as long as we can. Of course, on the parish level, this will depend upon the actions of those attending the Mass.

You are free to videotape the Mass yourself or to have a friend or family member videotape. Video cameras on stands must be in the choir loft. We ask that only those individuals actually videotaping be in the choir loft. Other family members should be in the main body of the church. This prevents excess commotion from becoming noise on your or anyone else's video. Anyone who sets up video equipment in the aisles or pews will be asked to remove his or her equipment.

At the end of Mass, the children will be part of the recessional. They will follow the altar servers and process in front of Father. They will process down the middle aisle to the back of church, cross over to the Holy Family side and up the window aisle to return to the steps of the altar platform. They will then take their positions for the group photo.

Please do not leave the pews before the children have reached the steps and everyone has taken their positions. This is not only respectful to God, as this is in the church, but to everyone involved in the recessional, *including Father*. It also prevents anyone from accidentally stepping out in front of the altar servers, blocking the aisle.

Please be considerate of the photographer. **He will give you the chance to take your own group photo before he begins the individual photos.** We simply ask that he be allowed to arrange the children so everyone can be seen and that he has the **first opportunity** to take a good photo. Although we try to arrange the children for the group photo at the Retreat/Practice, a puffy veil can make a big difference as to whether or not the child standing behind can be seen. So please allow the photographer to do some rearranging, if necessary, and to take the first photos.

Although the photographer will not be using a back drop for any of the photos on this day, there have been folks, in the past, who have assumed that they can tell the photographer to move out of the way so they can take advantage of the photographer's backdrop, lighting, etc., for their own photos. Any and all of this equipment is the property of the photographer and for his use only.

These actions are rude; however, they have actually happened in the past.

After Mass, please take the banner home to become part of your child's celebration.

By Friday, May 4-----Turn in the form for May Crowning to your child's Teacher or Catechist.

Sunday, May 14-----May Crowning will be held before the 10:30 AM Mass. May Crowning at St. Mary's has traditionally involved the First Communicants and the Sixth Graders. **Your child should be in the gym for line-up no later than 10:15 AM.** Please bring flowers for the basket, which will be carried in the procession. Some years have, unfortunately, seen a rather skimpy basket. It would be great to see the basket overflowing.

Your child is invited to wear his or her First Communion attire, including the veil. Although First Communion attire is customary and not mandatory, Sunday best clothing is expected. There will be a reserved seating section in the church for the children only.

This is the last letter you will receive concerning First Communion. If you have any questions, please call me at 238-3079.

Yours in Christ,

Cheryl L. Freewalt
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