

September 15, 2016

Dear Parents:

Through preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, children experience a growing relationship with God, recognize the difference between good and evil, and have the opportunity to repent of wrongdoing and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church. They are encouraged to see that, in this Sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and by forgiving.

Your child will soon begin preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation in his or her religion classes. To mark the beginning of this preparation—not only for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but also for First Communion in the spring—we ask your child to sign an Inscription Promise and have it witnessed by a parent. Then in a special presentation after the homily at the **10:30 AM Mass on Sunday, September 25, the children will be called forward to offer their Inscription Promises to Father and to the parish.** We hope that the children will find this to be a special beginning to a special year.

We will meet in the gym no later than 10:15 AM that morning to line up. Please bring the enclosed Inscription Promise, signed by your child and witnessed by you. We will have pews reserved for the children in church. Parents may sit anywhere they like.

Since parents are the first religious educators of their children, are instrumental in their moral development, and the first witnesses of their growth in faith, we will hold a **parent class for parents whose first child is receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Sunday, October 16, from 1 to 3 PM in the St. Mary's School library. This is a mandatory parent class for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.** Although parental participation in this class is not required if this is your second or third child, etc., all parents are most welcome to come.

First Reconciliation will take place in January. Father wishes to hear the confessions himself, without a visiting priest, and he would like to be able to spend more time with each child, so the class will be divided between two dates. First Reconciliation will be held in the church at 1 PM on the following Sundays:

January 15—Children with last names beginning A-G

January 22—Children with last names beginning H-Z

If there is a conflict on the date for your family, you may come the other Sunday. Other family members are invited to come also. This Reconciliation service will be an excellent opportunity for parents and other family members to go to confession. It is good for children to see that we, too, say, "I'm sorry."

I know that many of you are wondering about First Communion. First Communion will be held on Sunday, April 30, at 1 PM. The mandatory parents' class, for parents whose first child is preparing for the reception of the sacrament, will be held on Sunday, February 12, from 1-3 PM in the library. The First Communion Practice/Retreat for the children will be held on Thursday, April 27, from 8:15 AM to 2:30 PM.

More information about First Communion will be mailed to you in January; however, since some parents purchase First Communion clothing early in the year, the following are the clothing guidelines:

Girls: It has been customary for girls to wear white dresses and veils. Some girls have worn decorated headbands, flowers or simple bows in their hair. Since some dresses are purchased in bridal shops and are actually designed as miniature bride dresses rather than First Communion dresses, keep in mind that the dress should be modest. No sleeveless, spaghetti straps or halter neckline dress unless an appropriate shrug, bolero, sweater, cape or jacket is worn over the shoulders. The sweater or shrug, etc. remains over the shoulders for the group photo at the end of Mass. The dress should not be too short. If a long dress is chosen, the hem of the skirt must be at least a couple of inches from the top of the shoes. Remember that your child will be walking up and down steps. Can your child do this in a long dress in, most likely, new shoes with her hands folded? Is there even a chance that your child might step on the dress and stumble? Stepping on a dress, especially on a terrazzo floor, could be more than embarrassing—it could be dangerous.

Simple jewelry may be worn. Gloves can be worn for individual photos only—not during Mass or for the group photo. Tights, knee socks, or anklets with dress shoes are fine. No flip flops, not even "wedding" flip flops. Please make sure your child's shoes fit properly so that she does not shuffle her feet to keep them on. If the shoes have a small French heel or, actually, any kind of heel other than the kind your child wears every day, she should practice in them, walking on smooth surfaces, and ascending and descending steps. Prayer books, gloves, rosaries, or other items will not be carried by the children in procession; however, they may be held for individual photographs. It is best if parents hold these items for their child during Mass.

Boys: It has been customary for boys to wear a neat suit of any color, or dress slacks and blazer, white shirt, tie and appropriate dress shoes. Some people prefer bow ties, and these are fine also. If your son does not own a blazer, a nice dress shirt and tie is certainly all right. Prayer books, rosaries, or other items will not be carried by the children in procession; however, they may be held for individual photographs. It is best if parents hold these items for their child during Mass rather than to ask the child to keep them in a pocket. Children usually are excited to receive such a fine gift from special people in their lives, and the item rarely stays in the pocket; and so it becomes a distraction during Mass.

Once in a while, a family tells me that they have a used suit or dress to sell or to donate. If you have a need, please call me. Perhaps such an item will be available.

Again, more information concerning First Communion will be mailed to you in January. In the meantime, we look forward to the Sacrament of Reconciliation—the Sacrament of assured forgiveness and good advice for anything we find to be a stumbling block in our lives.

Yours in Christ,

Cheryl L. Freewalt
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