

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
Religious Education Program**



**Reconciliation/Eucharist  
Handbook  
2017-2018**

Dear Parents:

Can you remember when you received the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time? What about your First Communion? Celebrating a sacrament is an important step in the life of your child as a Catholic. Most of us have clear memories of celebrating these sacraments tucked away somewhere; you may even have your dress or mass booklet in a special place. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Religious Education Program is very excited and honored to help in the preparation of your child for both of these sacraments.

This parent handbook will provide you with the information about the catechesis your child will be receiving, how you can help your child at home, and give the details about the upcoming liturgies to celebrate each sacrament. Please take the time to read through the entire handbook, as this will be the main form of communication.

Parent participation and support is crucial in the spiritual development of each child. As a family, attendance at weekly mass is the best form of support and education you can provide your child. It will bring the classroom teachings alive as your child can experience all that they are being taught.

While the liturgies for each sacrament will be similar to those of the years past, please be sure to read the handbook to see the specific changes from past years and why these changes have been made. We are making every effort to create a welcoming and family centered liturgy for your child at each sacrament.

If you have questions throughout the year, please feel free to contact me at any time. I will gladly discuss the program with you.

God Bless,  
*Cherie DiCesare*

The Reconciliation/First Communion Program at Our Lady of Perpetual Help expects that children have attended religious education classes before enrolling in the second grade First Communion program. The Reconciliation/ First Communion program involves parent/guardian participation. In outline, our program is:

#### I. FIRST RECONCILIATION

- Parent Meeting – Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- Commitment Ceremony – Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- Forgiveness day during class time
- First Reconciliation – Either December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 or December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, as assigned.

#### II. FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

- Parent Meeting – Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018
- First Communion Retreat – During Class time on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 or April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.
- First Holy Communion – May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at one of three assigned liturgies.

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Since your child was an infant you have been teaching him or her how to make good choices and to recognize the difference between good and bad actions. This important task of teaching your child to make good choices also took place when you explained how to share, how to speak respectfully to others, and how to play fairly. You, yourself, modeled these behaviors too; perhaps you said you were sorry when you had been unkind. These actions teach your child to do the same.

How the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated may have changed considerably since the time when you first received it as a child. But some things remain constant. The primary lessons about forgiveness and acceptance continue to come from family experiences. Your child has probably experienced this many times when she or he has had to express sorrow for an unloving or selfish act at home. When you have forgiven your child during such times, you set an example of love and forgiveness. Through your actions, your child has learned to trust and say “I’m sorry.” It is through these normal forgiving moments that your child grows in his or her trust in God.

*How do I know if my child is ready to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

- Recognizes the differences between accidental and deliberate wrong.
- Understands the need to say “I’m sorry” when he or she hurts another person.
- Forgives others when they hurt him or her.

*What concepts does a child need to understand to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

- People need to say “I’m sorry” for what they have done wrong and try to make up with those they have hurt.
- God is always willing to forgive those who are truly sorry, but asks them to forgive them to forgive others in return.
- The priest and the church have a special role in bringing us God’s forgiveness.

*Prior to your child’s preparation:*

- Take a close look at how forgiveness takes place in your family:
  - Do family members have a good sense of what is expected of them and a reasonable understanding of what will happen if these expectations are not met?
  - Are hurts and problems talked through when they happen?
  - Are problems dealt with patiently and consistently?
  - Do parents and children feel comfortable apologizing when mistakes are made?
  - Do parents and children know they are consistently loved even when they make a mistake?

*The Sacrament of Reconciliation Text:*

The curriculum for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be the Loyola Press, God’s Gift: Reconciliation. The wonderful grace of Jesus is beautifully and profoundly demonstrated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and preparing to receive this sacrament should be a deeply satisfying and spiritually rich time in a child’s faith journey. *God’s Gift: Reconciliation* offers powerful, meaningful lessons to help children and their parents understand, prepare for, and celebrate this sacrament. This sacramental preparation program engages children’s hearts and minds through multiple prayer opportunities, active learning and compelling videos.

*Parent Meeting*

The fall parent meeting will cover the details of the First Reconciliation as well as provide the opportunity to update and renew the adult’s theology and faith regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### *Rite of Reconciliation*

- We examine our conscience and are sorry for our sins. We promise not to sin again.
- We confess our sins to the priest.
- We receive a penance.
- We pray and Act of Contrition.
- The priest gives us absolution and we thank God for His mercy.

### *The Act of Contrition*

The Act of Contrition is a prayer by which we tell God we are sorry for making a wrong choice. All sin is social in nature and affects others as well as ourselves. So our Act of Contrition should include being sorry for offending God and His people.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish will teach and use the following version for the Sacrament of Reconciliation: (Please be sure your child is familiar with this prayer of forgiveness, memorization is not necessary).

**My God,  
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong  
And in 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.**

### *Reconciliation Liturgies*

Reconciliation liturgies will be celebrated in two groups in December. Father Boland, Father Isaac and Father Nick along with other visiting priests will be present to hear the confessions of each child and members of their family. The evening will begin with a communal prayer and end with individual confessions. The children should dress in church attire.

Celebrating the sacrament with your child as a family will be a special occasion. Parents and siblings are encouraged to receive the Sacrament with him or her. Make the experience a festive one. Commemorate it as another sign of your child's "coming of age," his or her willingness to take part in the life of the family and parish new and "growthful" ways. First Reconciliation should initiate the start of regular reception of the sacrament. Talk together about how to make reconciliation part of your family life and faith journey.

#### *Reconciliation Home Activities*

- Look for and encourage opportunities to use the phrases, "I love you," "I'm sorry," and "I forgive you" with each other.
- Decide on a time when you will gather as a family to share hurts and mend fences.
- When you watch TV together use commercial time to talk about the actions portrayed on TV that either affirm or conflict with your own beliefs about God's love and mercy or the need for forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Make a habit of making peace with each other before going to bed.
- Attend a parish reconciliation service as a family, especially during Lent or Advent.
- Use opportunities that are part of everyday family life to talk with young children about the difference between mistake and sin.

#### **The Sacrament of Eucharist**

When a toddler moves from the high chair to the family table, it is a celebration! This new seat signifies a change from baby or toddler to that of a "big boy or big girl." The move brings new privileges and allows the child to become an active participant at the family table. First Communion parallels this family move, and is just as significant in the journey of faith of your child. The OLPH community welcomes the awesome opportunity to share this powerful sacrament of God's great love with your child and family.

The components of the sacramental programs are the beginning to and living out the Christian life. By attending such programs, the child and family are saying they want to be Catholics – with a living and active faith. Our Lady of Perpetual Help wants your child to prepare with the class work but also wants to include living the faith in daily life and by joining with the parish family for Sunday liturgies. The celebration of First Communion is not just about one day, but rather a way of life.

*How do I know when my child is ready to receive the sacrament of Eucharist? What concepts should my child understand to receive the sacrament of Eucharist?*

A readiness for communion is obvious when the child expresses a desire for it and is able to distinguish it from ordinary bread and wine. The first question to ask yourself is “Is my child at Mass regularly?” If your child is at Mass each Sunday and is capable of paying attention to what is going on, that’s the first step. When children attend mass regularly, eventually they want to participate more fully. This is a logical progression that leads the child to ask, “When can I go to communion?” Finally, ask yourself, “Does my child understand that this consecrated bread and wine is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus?”

#### *The Sacrament of Eucharist Text*

The students will begin using the Loyola Press God’s Gift: Eucharist in January as they begin learning the concepts about Eucharist. The wonderful grace of Jesus is beautifully and profoundly demonstrated in the Sacrament of Eucharist and preparing to receive this sacrament should be a deeply satisfying and spiritually rich time in a child’s faith journey. *God’s Gift: Eucharist* offers powerful, meaningful lessons to help children and their parents understand, prepare for, and celebrate this sacrament. This sacramental preparation program engages children’s hearts and minds through multiple prayer opportunities, active learning and compelling videos.

#### *First Holy Communion Parent Meeting*

The January parent meeting addresses the liturgy and the specifics of First Communion. This meeting will provide the opportunity to update and renew the adult’s theology and faith regarding the Sacrament of Eucharist.

#### *The First Communion Service Project*

As we complete the preparation of the children to come to the table of the Lord, it is important for us to help them understand that being the Body of Christ in the world means to serve one another. We want the children to understand what it means to be Bread for the hungry and the poor.

As part of a continued effort to live the Gospel, the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders will take part in a Service Project. The little boy in John’s Gospel had only a few loaves of bread and a couple of dried fish but the story tells us that he shared all he had; thousands of people were fed. Maybe your child doesn’t have bread and fish, but they do have special gifts that God has given them. They can share these gifts to help others. As part of the preparation to receive Eucharist, I ask that they choose something special to do to help or serve someone else. They may choose to do something by themselves or with their family.

It is my hope that through this service project, the children will begin to understand that getting involved in the ministry of helping others is the best way for them to learn about how they are to serve others and follow the example that Jesus gave us.

### *First Communion Banners*

Each communicant will be asked to create a banner. The requirements are simple and all material to create this banner will be given to you prior to Communion. Items relating to First Communion and or a special meaning to your child may be added. In addition, the family name is a nice suggestion. We ask that the banners not be too heavy. These banners will decorate the end of the “family pew” on First Communion Day. The banners must be turned in at the beginning of your assigned practice.

### *The First Communion Liturgy*

The First Communion Liturgy is one that celebrates “family style” versus all first communicants sitting and processing together. The liturgy centers on the family. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states parents are the “primary catechists” of their children and the family is referred to as the “domestic church.” It is therefore fitting that the child be presented for his or her first reception of Eucharist (as for baptism) by the family. This form also highlights the fact that the child is joining the rest of his or her family at the Eucharistic table for the first time.

The first communicant will sit in the pew with his or her parents and their immediate family. The rest of the family is invited to sit anywhere in the church other than the pews reserved for First Communicants and their parents. Some may wonder how this will make it “special” for the first communicant. The liturgy will involve the children: they will be part of the procession, several children will read the readings, the homily will contain a message for all ages gathered, First Communicants will help with the dressing of the altar, the presentation of the gifts and the priest will give a special blessing to the First Communion families at the end of mass.

Focus will not be on the child’s first reception of the Eucharist, but rather will focus on lifelong celebration of the sacrament. While a child’s First Communion is certainly a time for special celebration, it should be the beginning of a lifelong celebration of the sacrament. Each time we receive the Eucharist, we receive Christ himself, and we understand this more deeply as we grow in knowledge of the faith. While some things change, some things remain the same. The Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” May we all be renewed and refreshed as we welcome our children to the table.



### *First Communion Liturgy Date and Times*

The date and times for First Communion liturgies will be: *(you will be assigned to your groups after the first of the year).*

- Group A – Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 9:30
- Group B – Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 11:30
- Group C – Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 1:30

### *Attire*

The dress code for the children will be proper church clothes. The girls typically wear a white dress, veil and dress shoes. Gloves are discouraged during the Mass. The boys wear a shirt, tie, dress pants and dress shoes. They may also wear a suit coat if they wish. The shirt and tie may be any color.

### *Pictures*

We ask that pictures or videos be taken by family members only from the pew during the First Communion Liturgies. Parents are asked to convey this message to visiting family members. Following Mass, pictures may be taken with the priests, around the altar, with family or friends – whatever you wish.

### *Sacramental Fee*

A sacramental fee for Reconciliation and Eucharist is charged to cover additional costs associated with the Sacrament Program. This Sacramental Fee of \$50.00 was added to your family registration.

### *First Communion Retreat and Practice*

All students and at least one parent will need to attend a First Communion Retreat and practice. Your date will be determined later in the year. The evening retreat will run about 90 minutes. Together, we will spend time reflecting on the special day. We will also practice receiving the Eucharist.

The First Communion practices will be held on:

- Group A – Tuesday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 4:30 to 6:00
- Group B – Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 4:30 to 6:00
- Group C – Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 4:30 to 6:00

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**Father Jeremiah Boland, Pastor**