



ASCENSION RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

808 S. East Avenue Oak Park, IL 60304 PH 708-848-3099 FAX 708-848-2773 www.ascensionoakpark.com/religious-ed

September, 2017

Dear First Communion Parents,

Ascension Parish is very excited that your child is preparing for the next step in being a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church. Our faith tradition has three sacraments that mark our journey to becoming people who are claimed, fed and strengthened by God. When a child first joins the rest of us at the Lord's Table, it is a significant moment in his or her life, and in the life of our parish. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with your family during this time of preparation and we pledge our support.

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the entire Christian life" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n.11). The program used by Ascension Parish is based on *We Celebrate the Eucharist*. -a.k.a. "The Gold Book". It recognizes that parents have a primary role in their children's initiation. Parents and children work together to come to a deeper understanding of each of the nine themes presented in the program. Each theme offers a different perspective on the meaning of the Eucharist. As a whole they give a very broad understanding of the sacrament. We recognize that most of us have not thought about what the Eucharist is since we made our First Communion and are not sure how to pass on something we really don't understand ourselves.

If this is your first child preparing for First Eucharist, there are two parent only meetings to equip you with adult knowledge and appreciation of the sacraments. These meetings are offered so you can renew your understanding and application of our Catholic traditions, giving you the confidence to assist your child in his or her preparation. You will also have the opportunity to be "coached" on chapter 1 of the Gold Book with your child in a session we are calling "Gold Book Together" on October 15.

To make Mass more accessible to your child, I invite you to attend our 9:00 am Mass which has Children's Liturgy of the Word. Also, you and your child will attend a formation meeting called "Decoding the Mass." At this gathering the two of you will explore the words, gestures, and symbols of our Sunday Mass.

It is essential that your family attend Mass regularly in order for your child to realize they are being prepared to join the community at the Lord's Table. If a child does not attend Mass there is a real disconnect between all the hoopla and not really understanding what is going on. It would be like asking a child to play in a serious soccer match when they have never seen a ball before or never been to a practice or played in a scrimmage.

This year, First Eucharist will be celebrated at Masses on May 5, May 6 and May 12. Please fill out the Register Information /Mass Choice Form and return it to your teacher or the RE office. Also mark your calendar with all the dates on the sacramental calendar on the reverse side of this letter.

During this time of preparation our prayer for your family is one of peace and joy as together you approach the Table of the Lord. May all of us draw ever closer to Christ who is the Bread of Life. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to call the Religious Education Office.

Sincerely,

Diane Moriarty, DRE

2017 First Eucharist Preparation Calendar

September 28, 2017	Eucharist – Overview of program (Parents only) First time parents of First Communicant – Mandatory meeting During this session, we will do a scripture study of Eucharist and parents will receive information about the Eucharist preparation program and suggestions for how to work with their children in the home setting with the Gold Book.	7:00-8:30 PM	Pine Room
October 3, 2017	Enrollment Ceremony (Parents and children) At this service the children are presented with a copy of <u>We Celebrate the Eucharist</u> . The children sign their names on an enrollment banner and the community of parents and children pray together at the beginning of this special year of preparation.	7:00-8:00 PM	Church
October 15, 2017	Gold Book Together-Chapter 1 (Parent/Child) “The Eucharist is About Belonging” so let’s come together as a community to learn how to work with our child and the Gold Book. We will coach you through the first chapter of the Gold Book to give you the confidence and skills so you can enjoy the other chapters at home.	10:05-11:00 AM	Pine Room
January 23, 2018	“Reconciliation a Fresh Look” (Parent only) – For first time parents only The sacrament of Reconciliation is an encounter with God’s unwavering love for us. Pope Francis said, “The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness.” As adults we have a hard time grasping God’s mercy so how do we share with our child when we have a hard time believing ourselves? This is a night to delve into a deeper understanding of God’s forgiveness and our need for reconciliation. Mandatory Meeting – Sign up for one:	7:00-8:30 PM	Pine Room
January 28, 2018	Decoding the Mass (Parent/child)	3:45-4:55 PM	Pine Room
February 3, 2018	Decoding the Mass (Parent/child)	12:15-1:25 PM	Pine Room
March 4, 2018	Decoding the Mass (Parent/child) Tradition and ritual connect us to our God, each other and our spiritual ancestors. At this gathering the two of you will explore the words, gestures, and symbols of our Sunday Mass.	12:20-1:40 PM	Pine Room
February 3, 2018	First Reconciliation (Parent and child) Children and parents will reflect on God’s love and mercy, pray together during an examination of conscience and celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. Together we thank God for the gift of forgiveness and ask God’s help in forgiving others.	10:00-11:30 AM	Church
April 21, 2018	Bread Baking Day Prayer Service (Parent Volunteers and children in Pine Room) (Parents and children in Church)	8:15-11:00 AM 10:30-11:00 AM	Pine Room Church
May 5, 2018	Celebration of First Eucharist	11:00 AM	
May 6, 2018	Celebration of First Eucharist	9:00 AM or 11:00 AM Mass	
May 12, 2018	Celebration of First Eucharist	5:00 PM Mass	