



St. Mark's Catholic Church

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****IMPORTANT FIRST COMMUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION****

June 25, 2020

Re: Celebration of First Confession and First Holy Communion / Year 2020-2021

Dear Parent(s):

You are receiving this letter because you have a child or children who will be entering Grade 2 in the fall of 2020. As such, I want to take this opportunity to provide you with some information about the process for receiving the sacraments of First Confession and First Communion at St. Mark's Parish for students entering Grade 2 in September 2020. This year planning can only be done tentatively due to the COVID-19 situation which is still very fluid. There are still many unknown variables regarding what things will be like in the fall and winter.

Please note that the Sacraments of Initiation are to be celebrated and received in the family's home parish (i.e. the parish where the family attends Sunday Mass).

Children learn their faith first and foremost from their parents. It is in the home that children first learn about God and are introduced to a Christian way of life. This is considered the **Initial Preparation** for the sacraments of First Confession and First Communion. Those children who attend Catholic schools participate in religious education which is also part of **this initial preparation**, as is coming to Church to worship God and thank Him for all His blessings, especially the gift of His only Son, Jesus.

As the time for receiving these sacraments nears, the families come to the church to begin the process of **Immediate Preparation** for these sacraments.

Immediate Preparation for First Confession and First Communion will be accomplished through a combined effort of parents, school and the Parish:

Role of Parents: This year parents will be provided with two workbooks, a website link, lesson plans and guidance in order to teach their children the material for both sacraments **at home** over the course of the program. It is our hope that this will be a blessed opportunity for you to spend time with your children in their faith journey, by sharing your own experiences with them to help them understand their faith better and bring them closer to God. It gives your child a chance to ask questions, understand your upbringing and why their receiving of these sacraments is so important to you. It also allows you to revisit parts of your Catholic faith that you may have forgotten, and to grow along with your child. **It is expected, of course, that you will commit to attending mass each weekend with your family or watching mass online if we are still under the current pandemic restrictions.** It is the best opportunity for children to understand the parts of the mass, and to see you leading by example is the most important lesson and gift you can give them. **We will also be asking the parents to make a concerted effort to make sure the children know basic prayers such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, Guardian Angel prayer, as well as how to bless themselves and genuflect.**

Role of Schools: The Catholic schools will continue to teach the curriculum as it relates to religious instruction for grade 2 students.

Role of St. Mark's Parish: St. Mark's Parish will provide parents with all necessary resources and training to undertake their role via YouTube video links. St. Mark's will also provide lesson plans to be **taught at home** by parents to their child: two lessons in preparation for **First Confession** (fall 2020) and two in preparation for **First Communion** (spring 2021) as well as a possible **Retreat** for the children at the Church in April. In addition, there is the possibility that there might be a **Catechetical Training Session for the parents** relating to the two sacraments, but this will be confirmed in the fall when we receive information from the Archdiocese and the health authorities regarding restrictions on gathering.

Workbook and Videos

Parents will be given one workbook for First Confession in September and a second workbook for First Communion in January. The instructions for how these resources will be distributed will be sent to you in September after you have registered your child in the program. Also, there will be online videos that your child will be asked to watch, which complement the workbook material, in order to reinforce the information they are learning about the Sacraments. The **proposed dates and times** for parents to check in with a Coordinator at St. Mark's Church to review workbook completion are set out in the attached schedule.

Retreat

One retreat (children only) may take place at St. Mark's Church in April before the First Communion ceremonies depending on restrictions enforced at that time. There will be two times to choose from for the retreat. When you complete the online registration in the fall, you will pick which retreat time works best with your family's schedule. Once you choose either the earlier or later session, we ask that you **do not request to switch**.

We are providing you with these dates well in advance as the full program is mandatory and so that you can plan other activities with these commitments in mind. If you foresee a conflict with these dates due to other commitments such as recreational activities, vacation trips, family functions, etc., we ask that you please defer registering your child for reception of the sacraments this year and wait until Grade 3 or other suitable year.

Program Dates

Finally, we have attached a summary of **proposed** dates related to First Confession and First Communion next year. Please note I will not be able to confirm these dates until after school begins in September – this letter is simply intended to give you as much **advance notice** as possible and to make you aware of the time commitments for both your child and your family in connection with receiving these Sacraments. If there are still restrictions in place, we may have to limit the number of guests per family at each ceremony. We will also have to proceed with the ceremonies, even if there are restrictions, given the impossibility of continually postponing the dates.

Program Requirements

All of the requirements set out in this letter, as they will be further explained to you via video and email once you register for the program, are mandatory and must be met in order for your child to receive the sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion. Absence from a catechetical session at the scheduled time, non-completion of workbook material, failure to have your child's workbook signed off by a coordinator on the assigned dates or absence from the retreat day, if there is one, may result in your child not being able to receive the sacrament on the selected date. Please make note of all dates and requirements to ensure that both you and your child can complete all elements of the preparatory program.

I look forward to sharing with you in this God-given mission of leading our children to the Father through His Son in the Holy Spirit.

Yours Sincerely,



Rev. Michael Hughes, Pastor

Schedule of PROPOSED Dates for First Confession and First Communion 2020/2021

Proposed Date	Event	Explanation
Monday, September 14 to Sunday, September 27, 2020	First Confession Online registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. Requests for retreat group will be made through the online registration.* Further details on how to complete the online registration will be provided to families in September.
Wednesday September 30, 2020 <i>Timeslots will be assigned between 6 pm and 9 pm</i> PARENTS ONLY	First Confession Completion of Registration Process <i>(St. Mark Church)</i> <i>Attendance by at least one parent is Mandatory</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring registration fee (\$60) to cover First Confession program costs and a photocopy of baptismal certificate. We will be providing you with the tools and training you will need for the “at home” portion of the program. The workbook for First Confession will be distributed on this date. <i>(Paperwork/payment collection and workbook distribution will take place in the foyer of the church. An email will be sent to parents, who will be divided up into 5 groups alphabetically according to their last name, with their timeslot to come to the church to complete the registration process)</i>
Saturday October 24, 2020	First Confession First workbook check with Coordinator <i>Have <u>Sections 1, 2, 3</u> completed</i> <i>Check in with Coordinator for sign off on completed workbook pages for Sections 1, 2 & 3.</i>	<p>Before October 24, children should watch the <i>videos and complete Blessed workbook pages up to page 102</i>.</p> <p>An email will be sent to let you know your timeslot to come to the church for your child’s workbook check on October 24th. Bring your child’s workbook to St. Mark’s Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make check-in quicker.</u></p>
Saturday November 14, 2020	First Confession Second workbook check with Coordinator <i>Have <u>Sections 4, 5, 6</u> completed</i> <i>Check in with Coordinator for sign off on completed workbook pages for Sections 4, 5 & 6.</i>	<p>Before November 14, children should watch the <i>videos and complete Blessed workbook pages up to page 201</i>.</p> <p>An email will be sent to let you know your timeslot to come to the church for your child’s workbook check on November 14th. Bring your child’s workbook to St. Mark’s Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make check-in quicker.</u></p> <p>By this date, children <u>must know</u> how to bless themselves, genuflect and recite the Our Father, Hail Mary and Guardian Angel prayer.</p>
November 16 to 30, 2020	First Confessions Parents and children will come to the church on their assigned date for the children to make their First Confession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and children will be assigned a date and time to make their First Confession between November 16 and 30. Most likely, the First Confessions will take place on a Wednesday evening given our weekly mass schedule.
Wednesday January 13, 2021 6:45 pm Registration 7:30 - 9 pm Catechetical Session PARENTS ONLY	First Communion Registration AND possible Parent Catechetical Session <i>Attendance by at least one parent.</i>	<p>Registration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration fee (\$60) for the sacrament of First Holy Communion will be collected. We will be providing you with the tools and training you will need for the “at home” portion of the program. The at-home workbook for First Communion will be distributed. <i>(If the Parent Catechetical Session takes place, please plan for babysitters for your children, if necessary, as your undivided attention will be required. Only one parent is required to attend the session.)</i>

Proposed Date	Event	Explanation
Saturday February 6, 2021	<p>First Communion First workbook check with Coordinator</p> <p><i>Have <u>Sections 1, 2, 3</u> completed</i></p> <p><i>Check in with Coordinator for sign off on completed workbook pages for Sections 1, 2 & 3.</i></p>	<p>Before February 6, children should watch the <i>videos and complete Blessed workbook pages up to page 108</i>.</p> <p>An email will be sent to let you know your timeslot to come to the church for your child's workbook check on February 6th. Bring your child's workbook to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make check-in quicker.</u></p>
Saturday February 27, 2021	<p>First Communion Second workbook check with Coordinator</p> <p><i>Have <u>Sections 4, 5, 6</u> completed</i></p> <p><i>Check in with Coordinator for sign off on completed workbook pages for Sections 4, 5 & 6.</i></p>	<p>Before February 27, children should watch the <i>videos and complete Blessed workbook pages up to page 191</i>.</p> <p>An email will be sent to let you know your timeslot to come to the church for your child's workbook check on February 27th. Bring your child's workbook to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make check-in quicker.</u></p>
Saturday April 10, 2021	<p>First Communion Retreat</p> <p>Group A 10 am until 12 pm</p> <p>Group B 1 pm until 3 pm</p>	<p><i>Children will attend a Retreat at St. Mark's Church in preparation for their First Communion. This is tentative depending on the COVID-19 situation and possible restrictions.</i></p>

* **Note:** Retreat groups and ceremony dates will not be confirmed until all required documents are submitted and payment is made.

Tentative First Communion Ceremony Dates

Ceremony	First Communion Celebration Date and Time (Tentative – To be confirmed in September)
Ceremony 1	Sunday, April 18, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Ceremony 2	Sunday, April 25, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Ceremony 3	Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Ceremony 4	Sunday, May 16, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Ceremony 5	Sunday, May 30, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Ceremony 6	Sunday, June 13, 2021 at 3:00 pm

Note: There may have to be more ceremonies added if each family is limited to 1 pew or less because of current requirements of social distancing provided things do not deteriorate and remain at least the same. We will need to remain flexible as naturally it is impossible to have any degree of certainty at this time.