

Dear First Reconciliation/First Communion parents and guardians,

Thank you so much for deciding to participate in the faith formation program – we are blessed to have you with us! There are three main pieces in the Faith Formation year for you and your child:

1) Classroom studying and activities with our First Communion teachers. Students who go to St. Mary's or St. John's/St. Andrew's will do their faith formation classes as a part of their school day with Mr. Zachary Thell or Mr. Kevin Hoisington. Students who go to Melrose Elementary will have their faith formation classes with our First Communion teachers, Ms. Brenda Primus, Ms. Blanca Barragan, and Ms. Brenda Lieser, once a month on Saturday mornings at St. Mary's Church.

Parents do **not** need to attend these Saturday morning classes.

However, for safety reasons, we do ask that parents walk into church with their child, to drop them off at class; parents should also walk back into church to pick up their child at the end of class.

2) Family studying and activities. In this part of the program, YOU become the teacher of your child, but we guide you through every step. This family piece includes a few different components:

a. Learning Center evening for all (SMS, SJSA, and Melrose Elementary) 1st reconciliation/1st communion students and their parents/guardians. At this session, you and your child are invited to visit “learning centers” that will walk you through some of the basics of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist/Communion.

b. Take-home materials from the Growing Up Catholic program. You and your child will work on the materials together at home, at your own pace.

3) Liturgical celebrations

a. The Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation on January 14th, for all 1st reconciliation/1st communion students and their parents/guardians.

b. The Celebration of First Communion/the Sacrament of Eucharist on 4 different Sundays in April/May, for all (SMS and Melrose Elementary) 1st Communion students, their family and friends, and the whole parish.

For all of these family pieces, we know that households and families take many shapes. Therefore,

- If you are a single parent, we invite you and your child to attend together.
- If you're a married couple, we invite both you and your child to attend together.
- If one of you is not Catholic, we invite you both!
- If you are Catholic but have not been active in parish life yourself lately, we welcome you! We have resources to help you get up to speed and help your child learn certain Catholic prayers and customs.
- If you are living in a separate or divorced situation, we invite you to decide whether both parents can be involved.
- If there is another significant person involved in the raising of your child whom you feel would benefit your child to be involved, he or she is also welcome!

We are excited to join you in this special year of faith formation for your children and your family. Thank you for sharing your children with us! Please feel free to contact us with your questions at any time.

Blessings,

Juliann Heller, interim Director of Faith Formation faithformation@stmarysofmelrose.com or message in Remind App

Rita Meyer, part-time Faith Formation Admin. Asst. faithformation@stmarysofmelrose.com or text/call (320) 290-5687

Blanca Barragan, part-time Faith Formation Asst./Hispanic Ministry stmarys@stamrysofmelrose.com or (320) 491-4860

Brenda Primus, Blanca Barragan, Brenda Lieser, Zachary Thell, teachers

Autumn Nelson, St. Mary's School Principal

Important to-do list:

- 1) Sign up for the **First Reconciliation/First Communion Remind App** (This is the easiest way for us to send you reminders about important dates, as well as to let you know about things like snow day cancelations.)
- 2) Let us know the date and location (name of the parish & city, state, country) of your child's baptism
- 3) Contact Rita, Blanca, or Juliann to let us know **which of the 4 Masses** you would like your child to **celebrate First Communion** at (see the calendar for the 4 options).

***Explanation for why there are four celebrations of the First Communion:**

In years past, we used to have 1 Mass for all the First Communion students and their families. However, we now spread out our celebration of First Communion over 4 Masses on 4 different days, **partly for practical reasons and partly for Catholic reasons.**

Practical reasons:

When we allow families to choose from 1 of 4 Masses to celebrate First Communion, families are able to invite more relatives and friends, and there is room for you all to sit together.

Also, when there are 4 Masses for families to choose from, this gives families who have lots of weekend obligations more flexibility; they can choose a date that fits better with family work schedules.

Catholic reason:

As Catholics, we believe that receiving Communion deepens our relationship (our communion!) with Jesus. But we also believe that receiving Eucharist deepens our relationship (our communion) with the parish community. So, it did not seem to make too much sense to celebrate First Communion – a time when your child enters more deeply into the life of the parish community – without having members of the parish community there to celebrate with you. Unfortunately, when we only have 1 First Communion Mass, there is not much room for parishioners. But if we spread the celebration of First Communion over 4 Masses, a large part of the parish community will be able to be present at each Mass, to welcome your children to their new place in the life of the Body of Christ.

First Reconciliation/First Communion:

Calendar for 2022-2023

(all activities are at St. Mary's Church in Melrose unless otherwise noted)

Wednesday 8/31: Opening night of Faith Formation – First Communion families please come at 6:00 session

Saturday 9/10: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM (students only)

Saturday 9/24: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 10/15: Class 9:30 – 11:00 AM

OPTIONAL! Wednesday 10/26: All Souls/All Saints Cemetery prayers

Wednesday 11/9: Learning Centers 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM (students & parents; SMS, SJSA, & Melrose Elementary families)

Saturday 11/12: Class 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Saturday 12/10: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 1/7: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 1/14: Celebration of the Sacrament of First Reconciliation 9:00 AM (students & families)

Saturday 2/4: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 2/25: Class 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 3/18: Class 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Wednesday 3/22: Lent Reconciliation Liturgy

Saturday 4/1: Class + practice 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday 4/15: Class + practice 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM + Registration for Faith Formation next year!

Saturday 4/22: (first) Celebration of Sacrament of First Communion 5:00 PM Mass (English)

Sunday 4/23: (second) Celebration of the Sacrament of First Communion 12:30 PM Mass (Spanish)

Sunday 4/30: (third) Celebration of the Sacrament of First Communion 10:00 AM Mass (English)

Sunday 5/7: (fourth) Celebration of the Sacrament of First Communion 10:00 AM Mass (English)