



CHURCH OF

# Saint Mary

## The Joys and Blessings of First Holy Communion

*Parishioner Brenda Primus Reflects on Preparing Young Catholics for Sacrament*

**F**irst Holy Communion is a special event for everyone who is blessed to experience it. It is the first time that a baptized Catholic receives Jesus Christ – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – in the Eucharist.

Parishioner Brenda Primus understands the importance of this sacrament and is inspired by watching the next generation of God’s children grow in relationship with Christ as they receive their First Holy Communion. For the past 19 years, Brenda has served as a teacher for the second-grade sacramental preparation class and has led hundreds of kids to Christ through her lessons on the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.



“I want the kids to have religion,” Brenda says.

We believe that the Eucharist is truly our Lord Jesus. When we receive the Eucharist at Mass, we are united to God in his real physical and spiritual presence. The Church teaches that this union is so powerful that it makes us one with Christ.

For most Catholics, the reception of First Holy Communion occurs in second grade. To prepare our young second-graders, St. Mary’s has a long-standing sacramental preparation program. Preparation for First Holy Communion starts in September and ends in April. Classes are held once a month on Saturday mornings. Each class is focused on teaching these young people God’s love and forgiveness, and sharing the practical wisdom of what is going on during the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

“One of my favorite lessons is on the story of the Prodigal Son,” Brenda says. “In this lesson, I get to share

*continued on page 6*

Church of Saint Mary  
755 Kraft Drive SE  
Melrose, MN 56352

### MASS TIMES:

Saturday: 5:00 p.m. (English)

Sunday: 10:00 a.m. (English) & 12:30 p.m. (Spanish)

### DAILY MASS:

Monday: 6:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:30 a.m.

VER AL DORSO  
PARA ESPAÑOL



(320) 256-4207

[www.oneinfaith.org/stmarys](http://www.oneinfaith.org/stmarys)

## SUMMER STEWARDSHIP for Children



School is out! We hear many children say, “I’m bored!” or “there’s nothing to do!” Here are a few ideas to help children grow in their understanding of Stewardship as a Way of Life.

**Planting the seed of stewardship:** Give children several bean seeds and a small pot or plot of ground. Have them prepare the soil, plant the seed, and give it water. Make sure it is in the sunshine! Talk to them about the importance of taking care of God’s seed. (The seeds will sprout quickly in the summer heat!)

**Have a neighborhood talent show:** Talk to your children about how everyone has been given a talent from God, and they could plan a special show to entertain the neighbors, family members, and friends. Encourage them to recruit participants with a variety of talents such as: singing, dancing, showing an art project, telling a story, reading a poem, showing an athletic skill. Decide on a place, date, and time. They should create invitations and handle all the work.

**Plan and carry out a neighborhood clean-up and recycle day:** Make one day each week your stewardship of your neighborhood day. Give each child a garbage bag and latex gloves. Make one garbage bag for recyclables and the other for garbage. Go for a walk, picking up the trash and putting it in the proper bag. When you get back to your house, put the material collected in the proper receptacle.

**Write a Litany of Gratitude:** Give your children a special notepad and pencil for recording a Litany of Gratitude. Ask them to write down things for which they are grateful all during the day. Some examples might be a kind word from a friend, a beautiful flower, the softness of a puppy, some help with chores, a favorite song, a refreshing swim, cold lemonade, etc. At the end of the day make the litany part of your night prayer. Have as a response, “Thank you, God, and help us to care for all you have given us.”

A Letter From Our Pastor

## Honoring Our Lady in May

Dear Parishioners,

**M**ay is Mary's month. For centuries, Catholics throughout the world have included special devotions to the Blessed Mother in their activities during May. Best known, I'm sure, is the widespread and ever-popular practice of crowning an image of Our Lady with flowers during the month.



May is a beautiful month, full of renewal and hope. The March winds and the April showers have done their work, and the spring flowers are in bloom. Even though the earliest signs of spring have passed, May doesn't quite have the look or feel of summer. It is spring at its finest! And it's not only the flowers or trees that show new life in May. For many students, May is the month to prepare for graduations, and these students will soon move on to new phases in their lives.

And of course, May is a month of joy for all of us who claim the Church as our spiritual home. We spend the whole month this year in the Easter season, which closes with Pentecost on May 28. The joy of the Resurrection, the glory of the Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit are the themes that fill our Christian calendar.

But as we rejoice with Mary at her Son's triumph over sin, Satan, and death, we remember her faithfulness to God's will throughout her life. Indeed, she can be viewed as the model Christian steward. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pointed to her in its pastoral letter on stewardship: "After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship in their fullest sense" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 41).

Let us follow her example of total dedication to God as we rejoice in the blessings He gives us this month!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Marvin Enneking".

Fr. Marvin Enneking  
Pastor



## A Catholic's Guide to Good Summer Reading

**H**ave you been wondering what to read during vacation this year? Why not give spiritual reading a try?

There are thousands of titles out there — too many for any one person — just waiting to make a positive impact on your faith life. Reading is a fantastic opportunity for general spiritual direction and good practice for every searching soul.

Choose a title from “you can’t go wrong” authors such as Louis de Wohl, G.K. Chesterton, Peter Kreeft, Francis de Sales, C.S. Lewis, and Scott Hahn. Their works alone should take you well into the summer, and possibly through to the next decade.

Or, choose from this list of great Christian books, in no particular order:

### *The Story of a Soul* by St. Therese of Lisieux

In this autobiography and all-time favorite Catholic book, St. Therese teaches her “little way” of spiritual childhood. Millions of copies have been sold worldwide.

### *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

One of the most popular introductions to the Christian faith ever published, this series of broadcast talks has been collected into book fashion. *Mere Christianity* sets out to “explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”

### *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn

This offers a conversion story of a brilliant, anti-Catholic Scripture scholar and his wife to the Catholic faith. Now well-known speakers and Catholic apologists, Scott and Kimberly recount their story with simplicity and love.

### *The Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Hottest Questions about Catholic Teaching* by Christopher West

This down-to-earth application of Pope St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* is an easy-to-read, yet insightful account of the Church’s teaching on sex and marriage.

### *What Catholics Really Believe* by Karl Keating

Addressing 52 of the greatest misconceptions of the Catholic faith, Keating draws upon Scripture and Tradition to dispel errors and explain the rationale behind Church teaching.

### *No Greater Love* by Mother Teresa

This anthology collects the teachings and sayings of St. Teresa of Calcutta. Founder of the Missionaries of

Charity and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, St. Teresa of Calcutta speaks joyfully about her work with the poor and God’s call in our lives.

### *Surprised by Truth* edited by Patrick Madrid

Eleven converts give their Biblical and historical reasons for becoming Catholic. These unique personal testimonies continue to transform hearts throughout the world in an insightful read for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

### SOMETHING FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS

As for the little ones at home, nothing settles them into bed better than a good book. Seek wholesome children’s literature that communicates Christian messages. Be sure they are positive, healthy stories with characters they can emulate that inspire virtues such as courage, justice, charity, patience, generosity and prudence. To name a few:

### *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis

This series of seven fantasy novels is considered a classic in children’s literature. *Chronicles of Narnia* alludes to traditional Christian ideas within the framework of an exciting tale of adventure.

### *Little Acts of Grace* by Rosemarie Gortler, Mimi Sternhagen (Illustrator) and Donna Piscitelli

This beginning-level book is a fantastic way to introduce 2 to 4-year-olds to Catholic customs. It is written in an age-appropriate, beautifully explained way.

### All (or just one) of the 20 books of the Mary Fabyan Windett saint biographies

This unbeatable collection of saint stories, appropriate for children of all ages, is perfect to read aloud with the whole family.

### *Blessed Teresa of Calcutta: Missionary of Charity* by Sr. Mary Kathleen Glavich

There is no better way to introduce children to St. Teresa of Calcutta! This book highlights her work with the poor and includes a special prayer for children.

### *The Story of Easter* by Aileen Fisher

Tells the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and explores how different cultures celebrate Easter. This is recommended for children in first through third grades.

Happy summer! Happy reading!

## Students and Families Celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation

### *Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit*

**“B**e sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit” – as the celebrant confers the Sacrament of Confirmation, he says these words while signing the confirmand’s head with chrism, an oil also used at Baptism. This is one of three Sacraments of Initiation. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist “lay the foundations of every Christian life” (1212).

Sheila Hellermann wrapped up her second year teaching Confirmation in Melrose and was proud to watch the 40 young adults be confirmed. High school juniors from Melrose, Greenwald, Meire Grove and Spring Hill came together for Confirmation instruction and to receive the sacrament. Sheila team-teaches classes with Chris and Terri Ellering – Chris and Terri handle the fall, and Sheila teaches in the spring.

On Sunday, March 19, Fr. Scott Pogatchnik celebrated Confirmation with the young adults, their sponsors, family and friends. It was a special day.

“It’s an exciting day,” Sheila says. “It’s fun to watch them all beaming with pride over something that is happening at church.”

Spending Wednesday nights over the past few months with these young adults has been a blessing for Sheila. She has enjoyed watching them grow in their faith and knowledge.

“I always try to emphasize that they are now becoming adults in church,” Sheila says. “They are speaking for themselves now – at Baptism, their parents spoke for them.”

Each young adult chooses a Confirmation name, usually after a saint, and a mentor and a sponsor. The mentor and sponsor can be any practicing Catholic besides the student’s



*Confirmation 2023*

parents. When the students received the sacrament, their chosen Confirmation name was used. They had to write a letter to Fr. Marvin Enneking about why they wanted to be confirmed, their chosen Confirmation name, and where they are in their faith journey. Then, they met with him to discuss any questions they have before Confirmation.

Sheila, Chris and Terri want to get the whole parish community involved, so the young adults know that parishioners are there for them. The catechists put the candidates’ names on a tree before Confirmation, and parishioners can take a name to pray for. In January, the students participate in Rite of Calling Sunday, as the community commits to supporting them on the journey. The confirmands must also do service hours, from road cleanup to making cards that go out for All Souls’ Day.

“We encourage them to be God’s hands and feet

*continued on page 6*

***“These students are the future of the Church. Whatever we can do to get them excited and see themselves as the Church’s future is good. We need that excitement in their age group, so the Church keeps going.” – SHEILA HELLERMANN***

## Students and Families Celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation

*continued from page 5*

after Confirmation and to be a visible presence in the community by their actions," Sheila says.

Sheila appreciates the teaching model where the year is split with Chris and Terri – plus, they do a wonderful job of teaching the faith. The Ellerings have a powerful lesson at the beginning of the year on being laborers in God's vineyard.

"I emphasize to the young adults that as they age, at times, it's okay to be lost," Sheila says. "I feel like I am teaching their future selves. It's okay to have questions. There will always be a home here. The Church



*Sheila Hellermann with  
Chris and Terri Ellering*

is not for perfect people. It's a hospital for the broken."

Sheila also loves teaching about how the Holy Spirit has been present in her life and the lives of others. Overall, she says, teaching Confirmation keeps her grounded and connected to the youth, which she likes.

"These students are the future of the Church," she says. "Whatever we can do to get them excited and see themselves as the Church's future is good. We need that excitement in their age group, so the Church keeps going."

*Confirmation preparation will begin again in the fall – for registration information, watch the parish bulletin or call the office at 320-256-4207.*

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*continued from front cover*

the love of God with the kids and watch them start to understand how much God wants them. It is a great lesson to help them understand that God wants to forgive them of their sins."

"When I teach, I like to ask a lot of questions and get the children's perspectives," she adds. "The best classes are when the kids are excited to answer the questions and feel proud of themselves when they get the correct answer."

The most rewarding part for Brenda is watching the kids receive their First Holy Communion. "I get emotional when I see them receive Jesus," she says. "It is exciting and I feel like I did something good by helping these kids prepare for this moment."



When it is time for your child to receive First Holy Communion, Brenda encourages you to make that day special for your child.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime event," she says. "It is important to keep the day reverent and to absorb all the graces that are given that day."

Preparation for First Holy Communion is just one part of the religious education that St. Mary's has to offer your children. There are religion classes for many grade levels that are aimed at handing on the faith and building your child's relationship with Jesus.

"We are always welcoming extra help," Brenda says.

*The Religious Education program is in need of more primary teachers and teacher assistants. If you are interested in being involved with next year's program, contact Julianne Heller at 320-491-7537.*