

Sacramental Preparation Handbook

for

St. Anthony, Niagara



St. Margaret, Pembine



Sacred Heart, Aurora



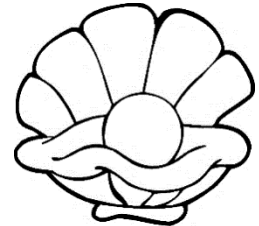
WHAT are SACRAMENTS?

“Christ instituted the sacraments of the new law. There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation (or Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.” (CCC 1210)



WHAT are the SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION?

“The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the foundations of every Christian life. 'The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.’” (CCC 1212)



WHERE do WE BEGIN?

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.'” (CCC 1213)



WHY is it important to have the RIGHT DISPOSITION to receive a sacrament? “To attribute the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental signs to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition” (CCC 2111).

POLICIES to Receive BAPTISM

- Not already baptized
- Must be registered member(s) of our parish community, actively participating in the life of the parish (Consideration will be given to those who receive permission from the pastor at their local parish to be baptized in our parish)
- Parents contact the parish and fill out the Baptism application
- Attendance, understanding, and assent to the Sacramental preparation classes offered for Baptism.
- Commitment to (forming) the habit of weekly Sunday Mass attendance
- Commitment to complete Christian initiation through the celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist at the appropriate time.

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the 'sacraments of Christian initiation,' whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For 'by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.'” (CCC 1285)

Requirements for INFANT BAPTISM (cf. Canon 868):

- At least one parent gives consent;
- That there be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the catholic religion.



“In fact the Church can only accede to the desire of these parents if they give an assurance that, once the child is baptized, it will be given the benefit of the Christian upbringing required by the sacrament. The Church must have a well-founded hope that the Baptism will bear fruit” (Instruction on Infant Baptism, *Pastoralis actio*, #30)

Requirements for ADULT baptism (cf. Canon 865):

- Freely choose to be baptized
- Instructed in the faith and the duties of a Christian
- Take time living as a catechumenate.
- Sorrow for personal sins.

Requirements for the SPONSOR (cf. Canon 872-874):

- Assist an adult in Christian initiation or help a child live as a Child of God
- One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; If two - one of each sex.
- Chosen by the candidate for baptism, parent/guardian, or priest
- At least 16 years old
- A confirmed catholic who receives the Eucharist
- Not under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;
- Not the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.
- A mentor may be assigned if the chosen sponsor is unable to frequently assist the family in raising their child in the Faith or accompany the person in their Faith journey.

WHAT'S NEXT?

“According to the Church's command, 'after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.' Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession. Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time” (CCC 1457 citing the Code of Canon Law).



POLICIES to Receive *FIRST RECONCILIATION*

- Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (provide proof of baptism if celebrated outside our parish).
- Reached the age of discretion
- Sorrow for sin and a firm purpose of amendment (cf. Canon 959)
- Preparation may be done at home or through the parish
- Parish prep consists of 2-3 classes and 1 retreat (2 hours)

WHY CONFESSION before the EUCHARIST?



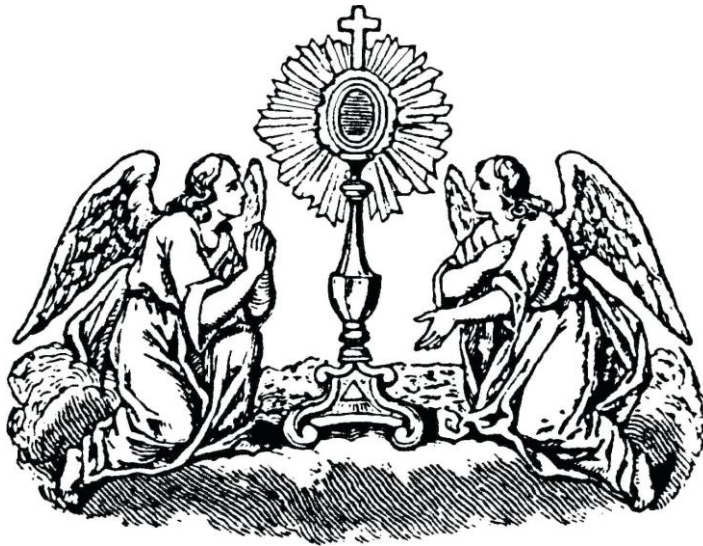
“To respond to this invitation we must prepare ourselves for so great and so holy a moment. St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience: ‘Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine

himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself’ (1 Cor 11:27-29). Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion” (CCC 1385).

WHAT is the EUCHARIST?

“The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch’” (CCC 1324).

“The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People



of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1325).

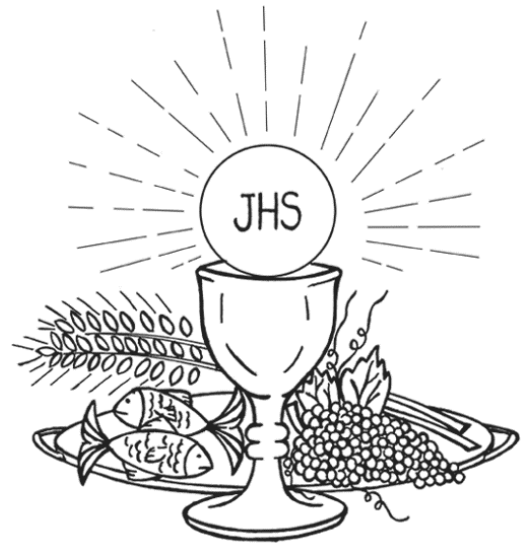
“Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all” (CCC 1326)

“In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: 'Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking'” (CCC 1327).

POLICIES to Receive *FIRST COMMUNION*

- Parents contact the parish and fill out an application
- Individual meeting (only parents in attendance if the child is younger than 16) with priest and Sacramental preparation leader to go over the application, expectations, and readiness. Family commitment to living as disciples of Jesus is needed to continue.
- Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Provide proof of baptism if celebrated outside our parishes.)

- Reached the age of discretion (This is generally recognized as about the age of seven. A child should have a well-formed conscience; capable of using reason to make decisions; capable of tempering emotions/passions; desires to receive Jesus in Communion; and recognizes the difference between ordinary bread and the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus)
- Properly disposed
- Made sacramental confession



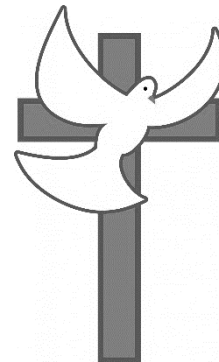
“It is primarily the duty of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the duty of pastors, to take care that children who have reached the use of reason are prepared properly and, after they have made sacramental confession, are refreshed with this divine food as soon as possible. It is for the pastor to exercise vigilance so that children who have not attained the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed do not approach holy communion” (Code of Canon Law 914)

- Must be registered member(s) of our Parish community, actively participating in the life of the Parish
- Commitment to Mass attendance (1 year wait if no history of attendance)
- Commitment to attending and actively participating in the Sacrament preparation classes, interviews, retreat, and rehearsal.
- Commitment to praying as a family and intentionally bringing God into the daily life of the family

WHEN should a person be CONFIRMED?

"The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time" (Can. 890).

"To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises" (Can. 889, 2)



WHAT is CONFIRMATION?

"From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church." (CCC 1288)

"By this anointing the confirmand receives the 'mark,' the seal of the Holy Spirit. A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object. Hence soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their master's. A seal authenticates a juridical act or document and occasionally makes it secret" (CCC 1295)

"Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal: 'It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee' (2 Cor 1:21-22, cf. Eph 1:13;4,30). This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial" (CCC 1296),

POLICIES to Receive CONFIRMATION

- Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and not previously confirmed in a Catholic Church. (Proof of Baptism is needed if not celebrated at our parishes.)
- Reached the age of discretion
- Must be a registered member (or commit to be a registered member) of our community, actively participating in the life of the parish
- Parent and/or student contact the parish and complete an application to fill out prior to the first meeting.
- Choose a sponsor (see requirements below) to help on the journey
 - A PRACTICING Catholic
 - Goes to Mass every weekend and Holy days of Obligation
 - Frequents the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - Fasts and abstains on appointed days
 - Obeys the laws of the Church
 - At least 16 years old
 - Received all the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation in the Catholic Church
 - (If married) Married according to the laws and teachings of the Catholic Church
 - NOT a parent of the candidate
- Choose a saint to help on the journey (this will be your new name)
- Individual meeting with candidate, priest, Sacramental prep leader, sponsor, and parent/guardian to discuss and discern readiness, disposition, and proven commitment.
- Willingness to fully participate in the yearlong Confirmation Preparatory meetings, classes, interviews, retreat, rehearsal, and rites
- The Precepts of the Church are lived as a law written on the heart

"The Precepts are 'set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. the obligatory character of these positive

laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor” (CCC 2041).

- ★ The first precept (“You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.”) requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord.
- ★ The second precept (“You shall confess your sins at least once a year.”) ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness
- ★ The third precept (“You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.”) guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy. (CCC 2042)
- ★ The fourth precept (“You shall keep holy the holy days of obligation.”) completes the Sunday observance by participation in the principal liturgical feasts which honor the mysteries of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints
- ★ The fifth precept (“You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.”) ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts; they help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.
- ★ The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities (CCC 2043)

In Summary a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation has...

A formed habit of actively engaged Mass attendance

"But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11)

Practically speaking, this means showing up at Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation while paying attention to what is going on. Reading the Bible verses for the day would be a great way to prepare. Ongoing catechesis on the invisible reality that is taking place at Mass will also help. What are other ideas that would help you?

A formed habit of prayer

"The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father, in secret; yet more, according to the teaching of the Apostle, he should pray without ceasing..." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 12)



"In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is 'the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit.' Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ. Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love" (CCC 2565)

In practice, this includes a formed habit of prayer. **SHOW UP** to a regularly scheduled appointment with the Holy Trinity. Take time throughout the day to lift your heart and mind to the Lord. What are other ideas that would help you?

A formed habit of living a life of virtue

'Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things' (Phil 4:8). A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. *The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God* (CCC 1803).

The Theological virtues infused by God at our baptism are Faith, Hope, and Love. The Cardinal virtues, that all other virtues 'hinge' upon, are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

"It is not easy for man, wounded by sin, to maintain moral balance. Christ's gift of salvation offers us the grace necessary to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Everyone should always ask for this grace of light and strength, frequent the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and follow his calls to love what is good and shun evil" (CCC 1811).



Perfection is something that God calls us to (Mt 5:48) but is an ongoing process. Growth in charity towards God and neighbor is part of the sanctification process still at work in us (Rom 6:19-23; Phil 2:13). Some ideas to help grow in virtue includes a daily examination of conscience and frequent sacramental confessions. What are other way you could grow in virtue?

Continuing a relationship with Jesus & ongoing formation

"In response to God's call to holiness, our faith and life as adult disciples are grounded in developing a personal relationship with Jesus, 'the Holy One of God' (Jn 6:69, Mk 1:24). Accordingly, 'at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth...' Catechesis aims at putting 'people... in communion... with Jesus Christ.'

As its first goal, faith formation helps adults 'to acquire an attitude of conversion to the Lord.' This attitude fosters a baptismal spirituality for adults. It leads them to recognize and repent of sin in their hearts and lives, to seek reconciliation through the sacraments, and to embrace the invitation and challenge of an ever deepening faith in Jesus. It means putting on the mind of Christ, trusting in the Father's love, obeying God's will, seeking holiness of life, and growing in love for others. Deepening personal prayer is a significant means toward growth in holiness in daily life" (<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/adult-faith-formation/index.cfm>)



In practice, this includes taking time to read the Bible, attend Faith Formation opportunities and, primarily, it means allowing Jesus to be your BEST friend. It is very helpful to FIND AN AUTHENTIC FRIEND to help you in your growing relationship with God...

"Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; those who fear God will find them. Those who fear the Lord enjoy stable friendship, for as they are, so will their neighbors be" (Sirach 6:14-17).

"Walk with the wise and you become wise but the companion of fools fares badly" (Prov 13:20).

"Do not be led astray: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Cor 15:33)

"If your intercourse is based on science it is praiseworthy, still more if it arises from a participation in goodness, prudence, justice and the like; but if the bond of your mutual liking be charity, devotion and Christian perfection, God knows how very precious a friendship it is!

Precious because it comes from God, because it tends to God, because God is the link that binds you, because it will last for ever in Him. Truly it is a blessed thing to love on earth as we hope to love in Heaven, and to begin that friendship here which is to endure for ever there. I am not now speaking of simple charity, a love due to all mankind, but of that spiritual friendship which binds souls together, leading them to share devotions and spiritual interests, so as to have but one mind between them." (St. Francis de Sales in the Introduction to the Devout Life)

What are ways you can have Jesus as your best friend?

What are ways you could form an authentic friendship with someone else – someone who also has Jesus as a best friend?

What are ways you can continue your Faith Formation?