



Department of Faith Formation

8499 Virginia Avenue
Pasadena, Maryland 21122
Phone: 410 255-4646
Fax: 410 437-5191
www.stjane.org

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As your children are about to be prepared to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church, it is my responsibility as pastor to make sure that they are adequately prepared and aware of what they are doing. Below are some of the things your child should know before receiving Holy Communion for the first time next spring.

The Children should know:

1. God is Father and Creator.
2. God is all loving, all knowing, and all powerful.
3. That there are three persons in one God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and that they are called the Trinity.
4. God's plan is for all people to go to heaven, but it is possible to reject (say "No" to) God and go to hell.
5. That in addition to our bodies, we all have a soul (a spirit within us that can think, choose, and love). This soul will live forever.
6. That God puts grace (a share of his life) into our souls when we are baptized. This grace grows when we do good and decreases when we sin.
7. That God created the universe from nothing and the he had no beginning and will have no end. They should know that he created Adam and Eve and that they differed from all other creatures because of their mind, wills, and souls (i.e. they can think, choose, love, and their soul will live forever). They should know that Adam and Eve committed the first (original) sin, that they lost God's grace, and caused the gates of heaven to be closed.
8. That God did not abandon Adam and Eve and the human race but promised to send a redeemer, God the Son, who took on flesh (became incarnate) as Jesus.
9. That all people as descendants of Adam and Eve are born with the stain of Original Sin on their souls and that this is washed away by the sacrament of Baptism which gives us new life. They should know that Baptism is one of the seven sacraments given to us by Jesus.
10. That there are two kinds of personal sins we commit – mortal (deadly or big) and venial (not deadly or small). Venial sin weakens our friendship with God; mortal sin kills our friendship with God removing his grace from our souls. However, all sins can be forgiven. (Reassure the children that they are not able to commit mortal sin until they get older. Young children can become quite scrupulous.)
11. That the sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) is a great gift from Jesus that God uses through priests to forgive sins.
12. They must also know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Act of contrition.

They should have a basic understanding of the Mass:

- 1 That it originated from the Last Supper, which was based on the Jewish feast of Passover.
- 2 That there are 2 major parts of the Mass – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- 3 That it is a sacred meal and a sacred sacrifice.
- 4 That during the Eucharistic Prayer, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.**
- 5 That the tabernacle contains leftover hosts of the Body of Christ. That's why we genuflect** before entering the pews at the beginning of Mass and after leaving the pews at the end of Mass or whenever we come into Church or leave church.
- 6 That they are free to receive Holy Communion either on the tongue or in the hand.
- 7 That they must be free from serious sin and have fasted for an hour in order to receive Holy Communion.**

These are just a few of the topics your children should know. I will be interviewing each student (a parent will be present) to assess his or her readiness to receive this sacrament. It is not an automatic event; it is a special privilege for those adequately prepared, who have an understanding of what they are doing, and are practicing their faith (i.e. praying each morning and night, attending Mass each weekend and Holy Days of Obligation, etc.)

We look forward to meeting you and your child during these interviews. If you spend some time going over this material with your child, there should be no cause for anxiety, but start early and don't wait until the last minute.

Fr. Carl