

Dear Parents and Catechists,

This handbook is designed to provide comprehensive information on Faith Formation and First Sacraments classes at Saint Theresa Catholic Church.

### Evangelization and Catechesis

The mission of the Faith Formation program is to foster a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ, rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we strive to support and nurture the spiritual growth of all parishioners, from children to adults, through comprehensive catechesis, sacramental preparation, and active participation in the life of the Church.

"The Church's mission is to evangelize, that is to spread the Gospel, through its words, its works, and its witness" (CCC 849).

Inspired by this call, we aim to cultivate a vibrant faith community that reflects the love of Christ and commits to lifelong discipleship.

### Where to Start

The first step in evangelization and catechesis is to ensure the child has received the *Sacrament of Baptism*. If your child is not baptized in the Catholic Church, then please see the section of this handbook regarding OCIA. **Children enrolled in Faith Formation and First Sacraments must be baptized Catholic.**

### Parish Registration

For your child to be enrolled in class, your family must be registered as parishioners at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Sugar Land. If you fill out a paper registration at our office or our online form you will be asked whether you are a registered parishioner. If you do not remember if you are already registered, please provide any information you can that will help us find your family in the registry. **Parish registration should include all family members in a household.**

### Faith Formation Class

Faith Formation **is not the same class** as First Sacraments (First Confession and First Communion). All children must be enrolled in faith formation classes prior to enrolling in First Sacraments. Information on First Sacraments is provided in this handbook on Page 12.

Faith Formation classes are an essential part of learning for every Catholic. Children should be enrolled no later than by the first grade and remain enrolled every year throughout high school. These classes provide the foundation for children to learn through all points of catechetical development.

These points include *Faith, Prayer, Creed, Sacraments, Commandments, Devotions, and Traditions*.

Exceptions from enrollment in a parish faith formation program:

- Children who attend a Catholic school receive Faith Formation as part of their curriculum and are not required to enroll in a *parish* Faith Formation program.
- Children who are educated at home with an accredited Catholic curriculum and/or using an approved text from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston are not required to enroll in a parish Faith Formation program.

*Note: The parents will need to provide the information from their curriculum to the parish Faith Formation Director for approval to participate in sacrament preparation classes.*

Faith Formation is offered weekly at the following times:

Sunday 9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.	Spanish	Kinder - 8	School
Sunday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.	English	PreK – Kinder	B-Classrooms
Tuesday 6:45 p.m. – 8 p.m.	English	1 – 8	School
Wednesday 4:30 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.	English	Kinder – 5	School
Wednesday 6:45 p.m. – 8 p.m.	English	1 – 8	School

#### Drop-Off & Pick-Up Policy

Arrival and dismissal times are listed below. Please adhere to these times as close as possible so other ministries and events at St. Theresa Catholic School are not disrupted.

<b>Class Time Begins</b>	<b>Arrival Time</b>	<b>Tardy After</b>	<b>Dismissal</b>	<b>Parents May Re-enter School for Pick-Up at</b>
Sunday 9:30 a.m.	9:15 a.m.	9:45 a.m.	11 a.m.	10:50 a.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.	9:50 a.m.	N/A	11 a.m.	N/A
Tuesday 6:45 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	8 p.m.	7:50 p.m.
Wednesday 4:30 p.m.	4:20 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	5:45 p.m.	5:35 p.m.
Wednesday 6:45 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	8:00 p.m.	7:50 p.m.

**All children enrolled in Faith Formation classes up to and including the fifth grade must be accompanied by their parent or guardian when dropping off and picking up their child for class.** Particularly for the first few weeks as the youngest ones adjust to where their classroom is, parents should walk their child into the building and wait by the classroom until their catechist arrives.

While class is in session, only parents that have signed up to be a hall monitor may remain in the building. Parents will be allowed to return to the building about ten minutes prior to class dismissal.

- We ask that only one parent enter the building with their child so traffic in/out the facility is better managed.
- Please refrain from looking inside the classroom while class is in session so that children are not distracted.
- Parents of children in elementary grades (K-fifth) must sign-out their children from the classroom. Only designated adults (18+) may sign-out a child from class.

- Catechists should have children remain at their desks as each parent arrives to sign them out. Children should not be running around the classroom or wandering the hallways.
- Children in middle school (sixth grade and above) do not need to be signed out and may leave the classroom to the parking lot to be picked up by their parents. **They must remain at the entrance of the school building until their car has been identified.**
- If a child in middle school has a younger sibling, the parent may submit a request to the Faith Formation Director to allow that child to be signed out by the middle school student. **This student must still check out with the Faith Formation Director before leaving the building after each class. This permission will be revoked if not strictly followed.**
- Middle school children that are not accompanying a younger sibling are allowed to leave the rear exit of the school building for pickup from the circle driveway off Seventh St. at their parent's discretion.
- If conditions are dangerous (i.e., severe weather, shelter-in-place) then parents and children shall remain in the school building until deemed safe by the Faith Formation Director.

### Volunteer Opportunities

Faith Formation is a volunteer-driven ministry. Without the dedication of parents just like you, it is not possible for us to maintain a safe environment that fosters discipleship of Christ. Please prayerfully consider helping us in the classroom, hallways, or office.

There will be a sign-up for hall monitors, among other small jobs throughout the year, sent through Flocknote. The more people who volunteer to assist, the easier it is for our teachers.

All adults who work with children on campus must take the Archdiocesan Youth Protection and Safety class, *Safe Haven* online. It is free, good for five years, and ensures our children are protected. Please use this link to sign up and take the class at your convenience:

<https://galvestonhouston.cmgconnect.org/>

### Class Parties/ Food in the Classroom

On the final day of each semester, the catechist may choose to have a celebration in their classroom. These celebrations are limited to the last thirty minutes of class time. Catechists should create a sign-up for students to bring food, drink, and paper items.

**The parish office will not provide any food or drink for classroom parties.**

**The school building is a peanut/nut free campus. Do not bring any items with nuts or traces of nuts.**

During other times of the year when snacks are brought into the classroom, please take care to bring prepacked foods, foods without artificial colors, and food items that can be easily cleaned up. Liquid items should be poured into the sink before being placed in trash bags. **No leftover food may be stored in the classrooms.**

### School Property

Each classroom is used by St. Theresa Catholic School (STCS) during the day. Parents, catechists, and children must respect the items in the classrooms that belong to the teachers of STCS. Many of the STCS teachers have paid for the classroom decorations, storybooks, and bulletin board items on their own. Please do not touch anything that does not belong to our Faith Formation ministry.

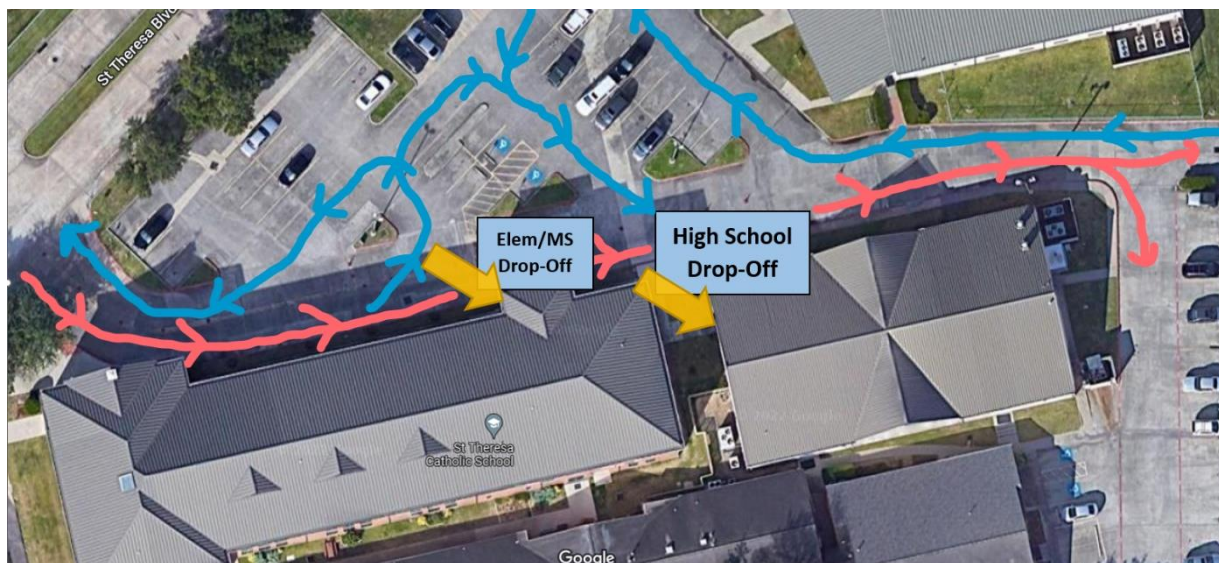
- Do not move or rearrange the desks. Doing so causes the STCS teachers to lose time when they return to work in the morning.
- Do not allow children to draw on the classroom chalkboards. Catechists may use the chalkboards as needed, but please erase when finished.
- Do not borrow any resources from the teacher's desk, bookshelves, or cabinets.
- Children should leave the contents of lockers, desks, and bookbags alone.

Any kind of resource needed by the catechists can be obtained from our parish office in Room 140 on the first floor. If you do not see what you need, please ask and we will get it ordered for you.

### Parking

**The Sugar Land Fire Marshal will cite and fine St. Theresa Catholic Church for failure to control parking along the designated FIRE LANES in the front of the school building.** Only vehicles that are actively queued to pick up children at dismissal may occupy this area. Parents may not park their car anywhere there is a RED curbside. Repeated violations can result in our parish office getting fined by the fire department.

There are yellow "No Parking" areas in the small lot in front of the school building. These areas must remain clear for safe traffic flow. To maintain safety of the children and pedestrians entering/leaving the school entrance, no cars may drive through the covered driveway. There is plenty of parking behind the Family Life Center and Community Center as well as the KC Parking lot.



On Wednesday evenings, the High School Youth Ministry often meets in the Community Center about the same time Faith Formation classes are held. Traffic flow will be available from 6:15 p.m. until 7 p.m. on these nights for drop-off only.

### Dress Code

Please dress in a manner that reflects the values of our faith community, promoting respect and modesty. This includes ensuring that the body is adequately covered and avoiding midriff tops, excessively tight clothing, and any attire with inappropriate graphics or language.

Shoes should be safe and appropriate for the school environment. Sports shoes like cleats, roller skates, or 'wheelies' are not permitted inside the school building.

### Etiquette and Respect

Out of reverence and in keeping with the values of our Catholic faith, all students are expected to demonstrate respect in both behavior and appearance:

- Upon entering any parish facility—including the school building, church, or chapel—**ballcaps, hoodies, and other outdoor head coverings must be removed.**
- When entering the chapel, **girls are welcome to wear a veil or appropriate head covering,** in accordance with traditional practice.
- All adults—including catechists, teacher aides, hall monitors, and volunteers—**should be respectfully addressed as “sir” or “ma’am”** by students.

These practices help reinforce a culture of reverence, humility, and respect for both sacred spaces and those who serve within them.

### Cell Phone Policy

We strongly encourage all parents to delay the introduction of certain technologies to children as long as possible. This includes providing unsupervised access to phones, watches, tablets, and laptops that can connect to the internet. It is widely observed and proven that exposure to social media and unfettered access to the internet causes serious mental distress, desensitizes the mind to the real world around them, and triggers a range of negative behaviors such as anxiety, depression, and an increased likelihood of encountering inappropriate content.

Our concern of having children with cell phones in the classroom is the ability to control content sharing among other students. To promote the safest environment possible, we will not allow cell phones to be used in the hallways, classrooms, or anywhere else on campus except when necessary to contact a parent.

Students with a cell phone must keep it on silent mode and in their pocket, purse, or backpack. Under no circumstances are they to be used without permission from their teacher or the Faith Formation Director. No children in elementary grades K through 5<sup>th</sup> may have a phone on campus.

### Discipline Policy

While it is very rare that we have any serious discipline issues in the classroom, please remind children of the importance of being respectful to their catechists, aids, and hall monitors. Everyone there is volunteering their time to help bring children closer to Christ. If a catechist is unable to control a situation, the Faith Formation Director is called in to assess the situation.

There is a verbal (and very friendly) warning to be respectful in class on the first occurrence. A second warning (not quite as friendly) on the second occurrence. Finally, student(s) responsible for the continued disturbance will be removed from the classroom to sit with the Faith Formation Director until the parents can be contacted for pickup.

### OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Children that are not Catholic (i.e., not baptized in the Catholic Church or baptized in a different faith) should enroll in our pre-baptism catechesis classes. For more information, please make an appointment with our Faith Formation Director, Paul Stoessel.

Email: [paul@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:paul@sugarlandcatholic.com).

### Absentee Policy

Children who are attending Faith Formation classes must have at least 80% or better in attendance for the catechetical year to be counted towards eligibility for sacrament preparation.

Children are allowed two absences per semester without having to provide an excuse.

Children are considered **tardy** if they arrive more than fifteen minutes after their scheduled class time. Three tardy incidents will be recorded as an unexcused absence.

Circumstances where a child will be regularly tardy or absent should be made known to the child's teacher as well as the parish office. We are always willing to work with parents that have special needs.

### Sickness

Any individual that has experienced symptoms associated with illness, including fever, stomach distress, rash, or respiratory issues such as coughing or shortness of breath, should refrain from attending events or entering the premises. It is not necessary to provide a doctor's note, but you should email [faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com) to inform us of an illness to obtain an excused absence.

### Tuition

Tuition is \$70 per child for the entire year. This covers all books and materials, art supplies, etc. We have a family cap at \$210. Catechists are not charged tuition for their children.

Faith Formation is a ministry that extends from the generosity of the parish community. We will never turn families away because of their financial status. Please keep in mind that the average cost per child in Faith Formation is \$130. Any amount you can pay will offset these costs.

Our parish office will send tuition statements in October, January, and April. If you are utilizing a payment plan, we ask that all invoices be paid by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Payments can be made by cash, check, or credit card. Please refer to the instructions provided on your invoice or see us during Faith Formation class.

### Faith Formation Office Hours

Parents may visit the Faith Formation office during the class times listed above. We only have one person available to take payments and there could be longer wait times. This office is located on the first floor of the school building in Room 140.

You may also come to the parish office during regular business hours, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., excluding holy days and other recognized holidays. The parish office is located on the far-west end of the two-story school building.

### Attending Mass

Holy Mass is the root of all evangelization and catechesis. Children enrolled in Faith Formation classes are expected to attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. As part of their Catholic faith, it is essential for them to fulfill this obligation, as attending Mass is a serious responsibility for all Catholics.

### Communication

The parish office will utilize the following modes of communication:

- Flocknote Email and SMS Text (**Primary**)
- Parish Website ([sugarlandcatholic.com/faith-formation](http://sugarlandcatholic.com/faith-formation))
- Parish Bulletin ([sugarlandcatholic.com/bulletins](http://sugarlandcatholic.com/bulletins))
- Postcards or letters via US Mail
- Signs posted at the hallway entrances



Every registration form collected seeks to obtain correct contact information for reaching the Primary Parent via Email and SMS Text using a service called **Flocknote**. This information is loaded into Flocknote at the beginning of the school year. Parents are encouraged to download the Flocknote app and learn how to use it so that notifications will be received in a timely manner.

It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure the information in Flocknote is correct. **Changing the contact information in your parish record at the office will not automatically update your Flocknote account.** These systems are separate. Flocknote accounts must be maintained by the parent.

Session Time	Flocknote Link
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Spanish	<a href="https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Sunday930am">https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Sunday930am</a>
Tuesday 6:45 p.m. English	<a href="https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Tuesday645pm">https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Tuesday645pm</a>
Wednesday 4:30 p.m. English	<a href="https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Wednesday430pm">https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Wednesday430pm</a>
Wednesday 6:45 p.m. English	<a href="https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Wednesday645pm">https://sugarlandcatholic.flocknote.com/Wednesday645pm</a>

Be sure to check your settings to allow messages from [mail@flocknote.com](mailto:mail@flocknote.com).

### How to Contact Us

**Please do not reply or attempt to contact us via Flocknote. We will not always see them.**

Paul Stoessel, Director – [paul@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:paul@sugarlandcatholic.com) (281-494-1156 x273)

Lourdes Ledesma, Registrar – [lourdes@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:lourdes@sugarlandcatholic.com) (281-494-1156 x245)

Emails sent to [faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com) will be sent to both Paul and Lourdes.

Catechists are provided with the complete contact listing, including emergency contact information, for all the children in their class. They are to keep this list confidential. Catechists may not use their phone for group-texting parents. Group texts may only be sent via Flocknote by the Faith Formation Director.

Our parish office does not publish contact information for the catechists. However, you may ask the catechist for their information and establish a line of communication in that manner, if you prefer.

#### Grievances and Incident Escalation

We hope that opportunities for any grievances from parents will be given to the Faith Formation Director for correction, first. Should it be necessary to escalate a parent's concern, they should reach out to:

Diane Blanchette, Parish Administrator – [diane@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:diane@sugarlandcatholic.com) (281-494-1156 x236)

Fr. David Angelino, Pastor - [dangelino@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:dangelino@sugarlandcatholic.com) (281-494-1156)

#### Class Cancellations

In the event of severe weather, shelter-in-place orders, or any event that will impact the safety of the children, the parish office will notify parents via Flocknote and place a special message on our website ([sugarlandcatholic.com/faith-formation](http://sugarlandcatholic.com/faith-formation)). **Please ensure that you are checking Flocknote, email, texts, and the parish website before calling the parish office.**

Our limited staff may not be able to handle the high volume of phone calls. Often, the person answering the phone is not going to have any more details than what was already posted.

The decision to cancel classes due to weather will take into the following considerations:

- At least two local news media reports of severe weather warnings
- St. Theresa Catholic School cancels classes or after-school activities
- Fort Bend ISD cancels classes or after-school activities

Anytime a parent feels it is not safe to bring their child to class, they may notify us via [faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com) . Their absence will be excused. Do not call the office.



### Circle of Grace

Every year, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston mandates that we present the Circle of Grace material. The goal of the Circle of Grace curriculum is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

The objectives of the Circle of Grace:

- Children/Young People will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Children/Young People will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify, discern and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to act if any boundary is threatened or violated.

The date we present this material is usually in the first week of February. Parents that have questions about the material should contact the Faith Formation Director at [paul@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:paul@sugarlandcatholic.com).

## Curriculum

Our Faith Formation program is based upon the **Faith & Life Series** by *Ignatius Press*.

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston categorizes age groups as listed below:

Arch-GH Descriptor	Age/Grade	Category
Early Childhood	Preschool 3 to Kinder	PreK/Kinder
Childhood	Grades 1 to 5	Elementary
Younger Adolescence	Grades 6 to 8	Middle School
Older Adolescence	Grades 9 to 12	High School
Adult	Age 18+ and graduated HS	

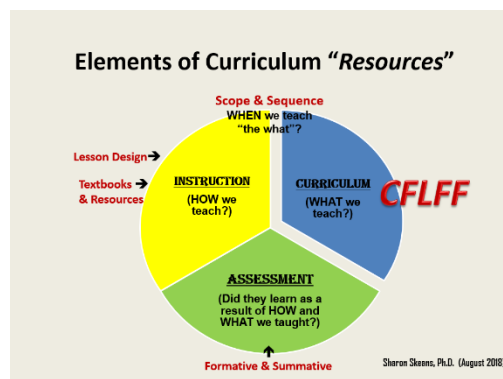
In 2013, Archbishop Daniel Cardinal DiNardo implemented the *Catechetical Framework for Lifelong Faith Formation (CFLFF)*. This is the same framework we use at St. Theresa Catholic Church.

*“The Catechetical Framework serves the definitive aim of catechesis which is to put people not only in touch with, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” (archgh.org parish resources)*

### Syllabus & The Curriculum Resources used in the classroom under the CFLFF:

- What we teach?
- How we teach?
- When do we teach it?

The underlying goal is to provide Faith Formation to children each year for reinforcement, increased understanding, and fortifying families through a desire to love Christ and be His disciple.



There are **Four Units** within this framework:

- Who is Jesus Christ?
- How do we get to know and love Jesus Christ?
- How does Jesus Christ teach us to live a moral life?
- How are we called to become missionary disciples of Jesus Christ?

Unit	Big Idea / Goal	Week	Essential Question
1	Who is Jesus Christ?	1	What do you know about the life of Christ on earth?
		2	
		3	What does Christ teach you about God?
		4	
2	How to know and love Christ?	5	How does praying help me to know and love Christ?
		6	How does going to Mass help me know and love Christ?
		7	How do the saints help me to know and love Christ?
		8	How do the sacraments help me to know and love Christ?
		9	How do the sacraments help me increase my faith in Christ?
		10	Why do we celebrate Advent and Christmas?
		11	
		12	What is the significance of the Liturgical Calendar?
Unit	Big Idea / Goal	Week	Essential Question
3	How does Christ teach me to live a moral life?	13	How do God's commands guide my life?
		14	
		15	
		16	Circle of Grace – Special Class Materials Provided
		17	Why and how does Christ want me to make good choices?
		18	
4	How do we become missionary disciples of Christ?	19	Why do we have Lent?
		20	How to increase prayer, sacrifice, and almsgiving?
		22	
		21	Why does Christ want me to help others?
		23	Why and how am I called to follow Christ?
		24	What is Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum?
		25	How do we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ every week?

In addition to classroom activities, we will expect to be in the church or Emmaus Chapel at various times during class. Activities may include praying the Rosary, Way of the Cross, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and providing an opportunity for Confession.

## First Sacraments

If you skipped to this section while reading Page 1, then please make sure you go back to read **everything** provided in the previous pages.

First Sacraments classes are for children who have satisfied the eligibility requirements to make their First Confession and First Holy Communion.

To be eligible for enrollment in First Sacraments, your child must:

- be baptized in the Roman Catholic Church,
- have completed at least one full year of Faith Formation or equivalent in the prior year,
- have celebrated their seventh birthday prior to the start of fall semester,
- be entering the second grade or later.

There are a total of six (6) classes throughout the school year. At least one parent must attend each session along with their child. 100% attendance is required.

Classes are held monthly on Sundays at 1 p.m. in the School Building. Please note that the classroom your child may be assigned to during Faith Formation classes or in St. Theres Catholic School is not likely the same classroom for First Sacraments. Upon arrival in the school foyer, a sign-in list will be laid out along the tables as well as name tags for the children. The room number for your child will be listed on their name tag.

We will need a copy of your child's baptism certificate. Please be sure our office has this by the end of October's session. If necessary, you may contact the office at [faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com](mailto:faithformation@sugarlandcatholic.com) to explain why more time is needed. Failure to turn in the baptismal certificate will keep us from recording the sacrament in our official registry.

Dates provided on the calendar for First Confessions and First Communion Masses are subject to change. Please be sure to check Flocknote, the website, and attend the First Sacraments classes to ensure you have the most recent information.

There will be a professional photographer that takes photos of all the children as they make their First Holy Communion at Mass. These photos are provided to the parents via digital download usually within a few days of the Mass date. The photos provided will be full resolution and with a copyright release from the photographer.

The dress code for First Communion Mass does not mandate participants to wear white, although that is the most appropriate and traditional color. Boys often opt for a navy or black suit, coat, tie, and slacks. Girls typically wear white or ivory with veils and gloves. Strapless dresses, plunging necklines, midriff tops, or skirts above the knee are not permitted. We recommend closed-toe shoes with the lowest heel possible.

Religious articles (e.g., bibles, rosaries, candles) should be brought and kept with the parents during Mass. The celebrant will bless the articles after Communion.

The Catholic Church does not recognize godparents for First Communion. A family may wish to select someone to call a godparent, but there is no official recording in our registry and these people will sit with the family as anyone else who attends First Communion Mass.