

SAINT JOHN NEUMANN CATHOLIC CHURCH

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PREPARATION PROGRAM

“LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME...”

Objectives of the First Holy Communion Preparation Program:

The children will learn the following at an age appropriate spiritual and intellectual level:

- ...that at Baptism we become sharers in Divine Life and are joined to Christ and the Church Community.
- ...that God calls the Church Family together to worship Him and that at Mass we give thanks to Him, listen to His Word, and break bread together as the first Christians did.
- ...that Sacred Scripture is God’s Word and that God’s Word is proclaimed at the Liturgy of the Word.
- ...that at Mass we worship God as the source of all goodness,...that God loves and cares for us.
- ...that Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.
- ...that sharing in the Eucharist strengthens our union with Christ and the Church Community.
- ...that sharing in the Eucharist strengthens us to live as disciples of Christ and to share in the mission of His Church.

Policies of the First Holy Communion Preparation Program:

- First Communion Sacramental Preparation is primarily a *process* of intellectual and spiritual growth and development. For this reason, it is the policy to both recognize, as far as possible, and to consider the uniqueness of each child’s personality, abilities, and situation in his/her faith formation.
- Full participation in all aspects (classroom study, home study, craft activities, family activities, family retreat days, etc.) of the preparation process is expected.
- Parents are fully recognized as the primary educators of their children and are expected to take an active interest in the faith development of their child. Attendance at all Parent Meetings, involvement in all home activities and assignments, participation in all parish based First Holy Communion preparation events and activities is expected.
- The Sacramental Preparation Programs are two years in duration in which children generally receive First Communion in the second grade. Children in the second grade who have not attended Religious Education Classes or children in higher grade levels who have not received First Communion yet will be referred to the Director of Religious Formation.

Features of the First Holy Communion Preparation Program:

The First Communion Preparation Program incorporates a multi-dimensional approach to Sacramental Preparation that includes the following:

- **An emphasis on parent catechesis –**
This is achieved through parent meetings which are scheduled through out the course of the year. The meetings are designed and intended to fortify parents' knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith in a manner that will enhance their ability to fulfill their roles as the primary educators of their children in an effective way.
- **An emphasis on parent involvement and contributions to their child's faith development –**
This is achieved through elements of home-based study and activities supplied to parents to work on with their children – in addition to traditional classroom based study.
- **An emphasis on family involvement –**
This is achieved through a Family Centered Workshops in which parents and children are invited to a morning long event of spiritual, catechetical, and social activities.

“SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT...”

Our Catholic Identity:

The Eucharist is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist). Sharing for the first time in the Sacrament of the Eucharist involves another step in the process of Initiation – another entry of sorts into a new phase in a person's faith journey in which s/he enters more deeply into relationship with God and with the Catholic Christian Community.

Any initiation entails entry into a community of people who share a common set of ideas, values, goals, and mission. It stands to reason then, that initiation (a ritualized form of entry) into a group involves learning about that group's shared identity, beliefs, and value system. To be initiated into the group means to take on the group's shared identity as part of one's own personal identity.

Initiation into the Catholic Church, therefore, is to take on the identity of the Catholic Church as part of one's own personal identity. In fact, it means to take on a life of discipleship in Christ, that is, to live as Jesus lived. In other words, it means to live a life in imitation of Christ *in conjunction with the whole of the Catholic Christian Community which constitutes the Body of Christ.*

Because the Office of Religious Formation recognizes the family as the fundamental environment of identity and faith formation in which parents are the primary educators of

their children, it embraces their role in the formation process and provides a format for parental involvement in the Preparation Process. In this respect, the Office of Religious Formation and parents must work together as a team to bring the children in the Sacramental Preparation Program toward a greater experience, appreciation, and understanding of the basic goals of the Religious Formation Program with particular emphasis on the following:

- A greater experience of the total and unconditional love of God who forms each person as a unique and unrepeatable creation
- A greater experience of their relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist
- A greater appreciation of the membership and connection to the Catholic Christian Community as the Body of Christ
- A greater understanding of themselves as members of the Catholic Church who share in its universal mission to bring the Gospel Message of Jesus Christ to the world