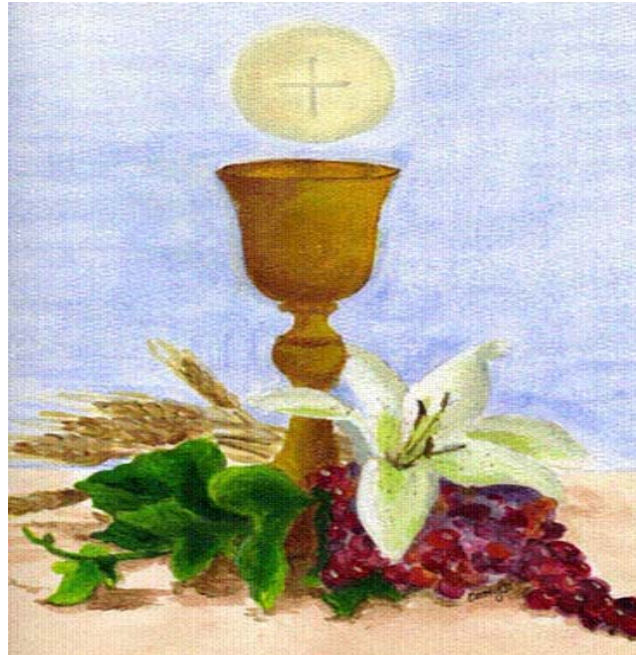


Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Church

Religious Education • 22508 Copper Hill Dr. • Santa Clarita, CA 91350 •
Office (661)296-6945



FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION HANDBOOK

2011 - 2012

First Communion Coordinator
Cathy Frick
firstcommunion@blessedkateriparish.org

All information for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation are in this handbook.
Please refer to it often.

A Catechist's Prayer

Blessed are you, O God of all creation.

From the dawning of life you have called me by name.

From the waters of my Baptism you set me on the path to this day.

In your generosity you have brought me to this time
when I am blessed to journey with your children
as they come to share in the Body and Blood of your Son.

Send the Holy Spirit to guide us on our way
in this time of preparation.

Help me to remember that it is through your Son,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
that these children will come to you. Amen.

"Eucharist" Catechist Guide, Resources for Christian Living

Paragraph 2252 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith, prayer, and all the virtues. They have the duty to provide as far as possible for the physical and spiritual needs of their children." You, the parent, are the primary catechist of your child(ren). We offer this prayer to you to remind you of your role.

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***Please Note: Infrequently, changes for Retreats, Reconciliation and First Holy Communion can occur. The Religious Education Office will keep you informed of any changes in a timely manner.**

September 30, 2011

Dear Parents:

Welcome to a very special year for you and your child. We will spend this year finishing the preparations started last year so that your child can receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Spend some time with your child and share some of the special memories from your own Reconciliation and First Communion. They will love the stories and it will make their experiences something to remember.

Tonight we are giving you all the important dates for the year. This should allow for plenty of time to get them on your calendar and plan ahead.

****PLEASE NOTE****

Attending both the Reconciliation and Communion Retreats are a REQUIRED part of your child's preparation for celebrating the Sacraments. These are very special, once in a lifetime retreats, designed to build community and prepare your child to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion. At each retreat your child will create a special memento to take home with them. In addition, the children will create something at each retreat that will be displayed in the church during the celebration of each Sacrament.

Keep in mind that the first communicants are a community of believers. The retreats are a community event and when your child is missing from one of these events not only does your child miss out on something special, but the community is incomplete without your child's participation. So please mark the days and times of the retreats listed in this handbook so that you and your child can participate.

Your child may participate in either the Class Communion or Family Communion. Class Communion is where the children will be seated with their classmates in front of the altar and will receive the Eucharist individually. Family Communion allows 2 adults who are practicing Catholics to receive the Eucharist with their child. These two adults will sit in the front with the child and receive communion with them. Additional family members and friends will be seated in designated pews behind all of the communicants. Sign-ups for the First Holy Communion Masses will take place directly following both the morning and the afternoon Reconciliation Retreats.

If you have any questions you can contact me by e-mail firstcommunion@blessedkateriparish.org . Or call me at (cell) 661 755-0940. I have a job outside of the church so the best time to reach me is after 7:00 p.m. I answer all e-mails in the evening when I get home from work. Please be aware that since I am not at the church during the week I sometimes have to contact the religious education office before responding to your question.

God Bless your Family,

Cathy Frick
First Communion Coordinator

Participation Requirements

Retreats

Attending both the Reconciliation and Communion Retreats are a required part of your child's preparation for receiving the Sacraments. These are very special, once in a lifetime retreats, designed to help prepare your child to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion. An absence to one of these events due to extracurricular activity (such as sports) will not be an excused absence and could hinder your child receiving the Sacrament of First Holy Communion with the other children in May.

One parent must accompany the child during each retreat.

Practices

All children celebrating the Sacrament of First Holy Communion must attend the practices.

At least one parent must be at the First Holy Communion practices. Important information is explained during these practices, so it is important for parents to attend.

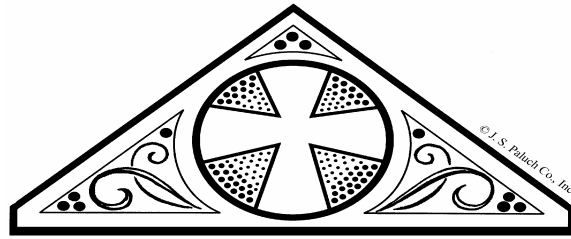
Seating for Class Communion

Class Communion is where the children will sit together as a class in the front rows of the church and the family members sit behind them.

Seating for Family Communion

Family Communion allows for the child receiving the Sacrament of Communion to sit with their family (the two adults who will receive Communion with them).

Because of limited seating, Family Communion is open to a limited number of families. Sign-ups for Family Communion (and Class Communion) will take place directly after the Reconciliation Retreat.



Parent Orientation Information

Parent Orientation

The Parent Orientation meeting will be on Friday, September 30th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm in Slattery Hall. All parents with a child who will be receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are asked to attend so that important information regarding the process of these Sacraments can be presented. Parents only need attend.

Volunteer Information

Reconciliation Committee Meetings

Saturday, November 12th
Saturday, December 3rd
Saturday, December 17th
Saturday, January 7th

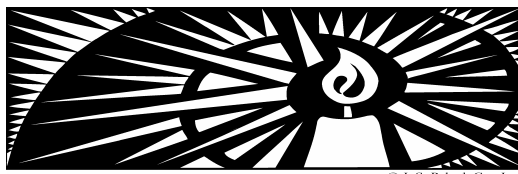
All meetings will be in Kateri Faith Center Room 2 from 10:30 to 12:30pm

Set-Up for Reconciliation Retreat

Friday, January 13th from 6:30 to 8:30pm in Kateri Faith Center Classrooms 1-6, Youth Room, Slattery Hall and the Chapel.

Set-Up for Reconciliation Services

Friday, January 27th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm in the Church and Chapel and on Friday, February 3rd at 8:00pm to 10:00pm in the Church and Chapel.



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Retreat Day for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, January 14, 2012

All Monday and Tuesday classes will attend from:

10:00am - 12:30pm

All Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday Sacramental Preparation (Home Study and FIRE) classes will attend from:

1:00pm - 3:30pm

Attendance is required and one parent must accompany the child. The purpose of this retreat is for your child to experience with others the meaning of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The time is divided into four centers. Each center will be a different related experience. Children and parents alike will enjoy this most SPECIAL DAY!!

Please arrive 10 minutes early for check-in.

Sign ups for all four First Holy Communion Masses will take place directly following both the morning and afternoon Reconciliation Retreats.



SCHEDULE FOR RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

All Monday and Tuesday classes will celebrate on:

Saturday, January 28, 2012 at 9:00 am

All Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday Sacramental Preparation (Home Study and FIRE) classes will celebrate on:

Saturday, February 4, 2012 at 9:00 am

The children and their family will meet in the Church on the designated date. We will have a communal celebration. This will include a welcoming, a reading from the Bible and a homily. Together we will do an examination of conscience and say the Act of Contrition. We will then go to the priests for individual confession of our sins and receive absolution. Each family member is welcome and ENCOURAGED to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be an example of their faith for their child.

Volunteer Information

First Holy Communion Committee Meetings

Saturday, February 11th in Kateri Faith Center Room 2 from 10:30 to 12:30pm.

Saturday, February 25th in Kateri Faith Center Room 1 from 10:30pm to 12:30pm.

First Holy Communion Quilt Assembly: Saturday, March 24th in Kateri Faith Center Rooms 2 and 3 from 10:00am to 2:30pm.

Set-Up for First Holy Communion Retreat

Friday, March 2nd from 6:30 to 8:30pm in Kateri Faith Center Classrooms 1-6 and Youth Room.

Set-Up for First Holy Communion Masses

Friday, April 27th and Friday, May 4th from 6:30 to 8:30pm in Kateri Faith Center Classrooms 1-6 and the Youth Room, Slattery Hall and the Church.





Retreat Day for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion

Saturday, March 3, 2012

All Monday and Tuesday classes will attend from:

10:00am - 12:30pm

All Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday Sacramental Preparation (Home Study and FIRE) classes will attend from

1:00pm - 3:30pm

Attendance is required and one parent must accompany the child. The purpose of the retreat is for your child to experience with others the meaning of the Sacrament of Communion. The time is divided into four centers. Each center will be a different related experience. Children and parents alike will enjoy this most SPECIAL DAY!!

Please arrive 10 minutes early for check-in.



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PRACTICE SCHEDULE FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Children MUST attend practices for their designated Mass time.

****PLEASE NOTE**** Practices are not necessarily on the same day your child attends Religious Education class. The children will meet in the Church at 4:15 on their practice dates. They will also be dismissed from the Church.

CLASS PRACTICE FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Children signed up for the 9:00am Class Communion Mass will practice on:
Monday, April 23 at 4:15-5:30

Children signed up for the 11:30am Class Communion Mass on:
Wednesday, April 25 at 4:15-5:30

One parent must attend the rehearsals for announcements and information.

FAMILY PRACTICE FOR FIRST COMMUNION

Children signed up for the 9:00am Family Communion Mass will practice on:
Tuesday, April 24 at 4:15-5:30

Children signed up for the 11:30am Family Communion Mass will practice on:
Thursday, April 26 at 4:15-5:30

At least one adult who is to accompany the child at the Family First Communion Mass must be at practice.



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASSES

Class Communion

Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 9:00am

Or

Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 11:30am

Please meet in Blessed Kateri Faith Center Hall at 8:30am or 11:00am

Class Communion is where the children will sit with their classmates and receive Communion first.

Family Communion

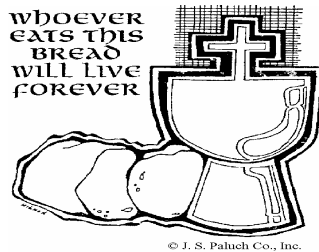
Saturday, May 5, 2012 at 9:00am

Or

Saturday, May 5, 2012 at 11:30am

Please meet in the Blessed Kateri Faith Center Hall at 8:30am or 11:00am

Family Communion allows for the child receiving the Sacrament of Communion to sit with two of their family members, usually their parents.



Prayers

On this and the next page, please find a copy of the prayers your child learned last year. They will be asked to recite these prayers before the Christmas break.

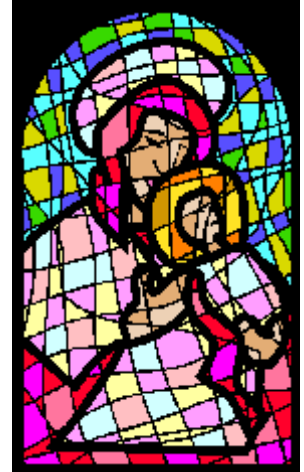
You will also find a copy of the Act of Contrition that they are to learn this year. They will learn about this prayer (what exactly the words mean) in class. However, it is the family's responsibility to help their child learn the prayer themselves. They will need to know this prayer before the Christmas break.

Prayer is raising the mind and soul to God.

Vocal prayer is the recitation of prayer according to a set form, for example, the Lord's Prayer or the Rosary.

Mental prayer is the direction and control of thoughts toward God or a truth of religion.

Christ Himself is the example of man in prayer. He prayed to the Father at all the moments of His life, and man prays in His name. (Jn. 14:13-14)



The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Our Father

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ACT OF CONTRITION

The Act of Contrition is a prayer by which we tell God we are sorry for making a wrong choice. All sin is social in nature and affects others as well as ourselves. So our Act of Contrition should include being sorry for offending God and His people.

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Our Savior Jesus Christ,
suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.

Any spontaneous prayer that tells God you are sorry, that you will mend your ways and avoid what leads to sin is a good Act of Contrition.

Contrition for sins should also include our CONVERSION. Conversion is defined as a complete change of heart. In conversion, we tell God we love Him and will amend our life. This concept will be explained to the children.

The children will learn that when they say "I am sorry" they must come to understand that they must try to change their behavior. They must do something about the wrong choice they committed and make promises to God to try not to repeat the wrong. Another way of seeing conversion is living God's Law of Love.

DAY OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION INFORMATION

Dress Code

Girls

White or pastel-colored dresses, regular length or long. If long dresses are worn, please be sure they are short enough for your child to walk up and down stairs without it being necessary to hold the dress up. No hoops in skirts. Please exercise modesty in necklines and hemlines. Shawls should not be worn as they are difficult for the child to hold onto before and after receiving Communion. Veils, flowers, ribbons and wreaths may be worn in the hair. No gloves.

Boys

White shirts, short or long sleeves.

White or dark colored tie, regular or bow tie style.

Dark colored trousers. No shorts.

Dress shoes.

No jackets.

Religious Articles

Rosaries or prayer books may be purchased as mementos for your child. However, **NO RELIGIOUS ARTICLES WILL BE PERMITTED AT MASS ON FIRST COMMUNION DAY** except at the Family Communion mass. They are a distraction for the children and, unfortunately, often forgotten in church. There will be a special booklet in the church for them to follow along with the prayers and songs.

FIRST COMMUNION CERTIFICATES

The First Communion Certificates will be available after each of the First Holy Communion Masses.

If you should forget to pick the certificate up, they will be available in the Religious Education Office through the end of May.

Any certificates that are not picked up will be mailed in June.

If you have questions you can contact the Religious Education Office 661-296-6945 x7903.

PHOTOGRAPHS

During the celebration of any Liturgy, PICTURE TAKING OF ANY KIND CAN BE DISRUPTIVE AND IRREVERENT SO IT IS NOT ALLOWED BY ANYONE, except the designated professional photographer.

The photographer will take a beautiful picture of every child receiving Communion. The picture will be offered to the parents to purchase. More details will be available about pictures closer to the reception of the Sacrament. If you have questions regarding the purchase of pictures, please contact the photographer directly.

Religious Education Classes after the reception of First Holy Communion

Children will return to their Religious Education class to share the experience of receiving Jesus for the first time with their classmates and their catechist. Please refer to your child's class syllabus for the class dates.

We will have May Crowning during the week of May 7, 2012.

They are also invited to the End of the Year Mass and BBQ on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 starting at 4:30pm.



Confession



Once again the sparkling sun is reflected in the blue Madawaska (River), and I have been thinking, of all things, about confession! Lately, it seems to me, Catholics have talked a lot about confession. I have read quite a few articles about it, too, and I'm thinking how strange it all is.

Due to my Russian heritage, I have always considered confession a wonderful thing. When I was little, it meant going to a church, kneeling before a priest, and telling him my thoughts. In my imagination it was much more than that however. My mother, very gently and simply, explained it. I had committed a fault and knew that God wouldn't like it, so I sort of ran towards him and, sitting on his lap and putting my arms around his neck, I would kiss him – like I did my father – and tell him how sorry I was for having done something he didn't like.

In my imagination, Christ hugged me and said something like, "That's all right, little girl. I know it is not easy to always do the right thing." Then he would kiss me and bless me and say, "Now go and play."

Yes, confession is Christ's kiss of peace, of forgiveness. It's a simple thing, not very complicated. Perhaps the way my mother taught me stayed with me. I was never afraid to go "in the box" (or "out of the box," as I often had to do in rural parishes). Always, before my eyes, were the love and forgiveness of God, and his immense mercy.

Confession was never a place, nor even a priest. I never looked at the priest, for clearly, I always saw Christ. Confession was always a joy. I was never taught to go to confession on a certain date or at a certain time. I knew that I had to go to confession once a year at least. That seemed pretty funny. Surely one would like to go and be blessed by Christ and hear his words, "Go in peace," more than once a year! Thus, I went when the Spirit of God moved me. Sometimes I would go everyday for a week or two or more. Then I would say to Christ, "By your grace, I haven't committed any sins or faults that I know of, but I am very weary and tired so I come to get your kiss of peace and be covered with the mantle of your mercy once again; I need it so much for tomorrow."

So I was wondering what all those discussions about confession were about. All kinds of arguments are brought forth in those articles – arguments about the dangers of legalism, about the fear that surrounded the sacrament in the past, and how, because of these things, it must be changed. I think what should be changed is not the

confessional box, nor the practice of open confession such as the Russians have and which is now frequently the practice in parishes. No. I think the change must come through the hearts of men.

The change must come from the parents who are the primary teachers of the spiritual life of their children. It must come from parents whose own consciences are delicately formed, and who can transmit that delicacy to their children. From the parents, the child absorbs the power to distinguish between good and evil, the ability to examine his or her conscience openly and in peace; from the parents the child acquires the understanding of Christ's infinite mercy and love.

Didn't Christ say, "I have come not for those who are healthy, but for the sick, and not for the just, but for sinners?" He spoke of himself as a physician, a healer. So what is all this talk about confession? Who of us would not mind standing in line before a doctor's office if he or she were sick? Do we really mind standing in line to be kissed by Christ?

For those of us who have been guided by our parents, it seems rather incomprehensible that so much fuss should be raised about going to confession. A sick person goes to a doctor; so a childlike soul goes to Christ to be consoled, to be healed, to be forgiven. It is like a lover running into the arms of the Beloved.

~ Servant of God, Catherine de Hueck Doherty

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Eucharist: Food for the Journey of Discipleship by Tom Quinlan

Have you ever taken a long, maybe really long, car trip? Most of us probably have. Can you remember what it was like? The sights, the fun, the fatigue, the stops. Long travels, whether in a car or on a bike or walking a trail out in nature can, upon reflection, be a metaphor for the journey of life.

Sometimes our lives are headed uphill, sometimes downhill. Sometimes we're traveling in sunny, pleasant conditions, sometimes we're immersed in clouds, fog, and even the dark of night. But no matter, onward we go because we have a destination that we need to reach.

For the Catholic Christian person, the road of life is traveled in faith. Baptism is so important because it is our starting point and our compass. It orients us for the journey of discipleship, the close following of our Lord, Jesus. Baptism gives us a special grace-filled relationship to Christ, and through him, to all the baptized who become our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Now, if Baptism sends us forth on a path of Christian discipleship, the Eucharist is our food for the journey! Whether we refer to it as the Bread of Life, the Blessed Sacrament, or Body of Christ, the Eucharist is the most intimate gift Christ leaves to us. It actually is, in a way no one can fully grasp, the presence of Christ with us and in us!

The Eucharist is real food and real drink, ordinary foods made from wheat and grapes that we lift up to God, returned to us as the extraordinary sacrament of Christ for us. It is made possible by Jesus' act of complete surrender to the will of the Father, whereby he offers up his life, his love, and finally his body and blood on the Cross.

The Eucharist embodies the transformative power of the Cross. It represents the Paschal Mystery, from which we know that, in Christ, death no longer has power to destroy... that God's grace is greater than sin and darkness. The Eucharist, first shared with his disciples on the night before he died, contains Jesus' everything, given so that we might live more fully here in this world and ultimately be granted a share in life eternal.

And so, as at the Last Supper, Christ wishes today to feed us. He longs to be our refreshment, our food for the difficult, beautiful journey of life to which God calls us. When we partake in the Eucharist we are tapping into the very life of God, made fully available to us now and forever through the death and Resurrection of Christ. It is right that the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*.... frames the Eucharist (both as sacrament and as the liturgical celebration) as "the source and the summit of Christian life!"

Certainly this is something to keep in mind on those days we might feel resistant to attending Mass. Or when we find ourselves a bit bored and wondering what we are getting out of Mass. Mass is, of course, more about participation than simply receiving. It is more about us than me.

The Eucharist, as liturgy, is a communal act of divine worship, where everyone's full presence and active prayer is vital in this greatest prayer of the Church.

After all God has done for us in Christ, why would we ever try to travel through life without his help? Jesus knew how difficult it would be for us to follow in his path. That is precisely why he gave us his Body and Blood, truly present in the Eucharist...so that he could be intimately present to us, nourishing us for the journey of Christ-like discipleship. Let us always stay connected to the love of Christ offered to us in this Bread of Life. Christ shares it with us that we might remain true to the dignity of our baptismal identity and stay on the course our Baptism set.

Our new National Directory for Catechesis reminds us that "we are called to realize that we become what we receive... which has great implications for how we live and act." (p 126) Saying "Amen" when we take the Eucharist should not only be a "yes, I believe," but also a "yes, I become." In this Year of the Eucharist and always, may the Eucharist not only be the Body of Christ for us. May it also be our food to help us together to become more fully the voice, the heart, the Body of Christ for our families, for our neighborhood and for our world today!

Tom Quinlan is the director of the Religious Education Office in the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois. He previously served in parish and diocesan catechetical positions in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Tom holds a Masters of Divinity from University of St. Mary of the Lake and has presented on a number of faith themes in parishes throughout Chicagoland. He is an avid traveler and photographer of western North America.

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