

Sacramental Preparation FAQ's

St. Mary Catholic Parish

What Sacraments do grade-school children receive and when?

- Grade school children who were baptized in the Catholic Church as infants or young children receive 3 Sacraments: Reconciliation, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist
- If a grade-school child has not yet been baptized or was baptized in a non-Catholic church, they are prepared to receive all the Sacraments of Initiation at the same time (usually at the Easter Vigil Mass): Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist

What is the recommended age for the Sacraments?

- For Reconciliation (going to Confession)—around age 7, usually in 2nd or 3rd grade
- For Confirmation/First Eucharist—after receiving Reconciliation, usually in 3rd or 4th grade
- Parents are the best judge of when their child is ready—any parent can consult with the DRE and/or Pastor and determine the best age for their child

Why aren't Sacraments taught in Catholic School or Religious Education?

- Sacraments ARE taught in every approved text used in Catholic schools and Religious Education! Children learn, each year, how the Sacraments fit into our Catholic beliefs and practices—but preparing to receive a Sacrament requires more specialized formation and calls together only those children in the parish who are ready to receive no matter what grade or where they attend school.
- Preparation to receive a Sacrament is more than teaching about the Sacrament—it is helping each child and their parents understand how to discern if one is ready for the Sacrament. Reception of a Sacrament isn't an "automatic" thing one does in a particular grade—families take time to discern, prepare and celebrate together this important step in a child's maturing faith. Preparation for a Sacrament provides detailed instruction on why and how to receive the Sacrament—and is a special time of formation for the entire family.
- Best practices from thriving Catholic parishes and the US Bishop's instructions encourage a parish-based, parent-involved 2-year preparation program—that's what we offer at St. Mary Catholic Parish. We unite all our families with children who are ready for a Sacrament into ONE community who can support one another and celebrate this milestone together.

What does the Sacramental Preparation program look like?

- Sacramental Preparation is separate from the general religious instruction a child receives either at a Catholic school or in religious education or in a homeschool setting. Sacramental Preparation is designed to prepare a child for a specific Sacrament—not as a general instruction about their Catholic faith.

- Sacramental Preparation involves attending a series of classes for children (and a concurrent series for parents). Children receive a preparation book published by the Augustine Institute (Signs of Grace). Parents work through material as adult learners to update/deepen their own understanding of the Sacrament and to give them tools to support their child's education. After their first child completes the program, parents are not required to attend meetings with subsequent children (but are encouraged to volunteer as a catechist for the children). The preparation program concludes with a family retreat (which includes "rehearsal" time for the Sacrament) and then a parish celebration of the Sacrament.
- **Reconciliation** Preparation involves 7 lessons and a family retreat—beginning in late Fall and concluding in the Spring. **Confirmation and First Holy Eucharist** involves 11 lessons (3 on Confirmation, 8 on Holy Eucharist) and a family retreat—beginning in Fall and concluding in Spring. If a child cannot make a meeting, parents can work with the child at home to complete a lesson.

What if my child "missed" Confirmation and is older than 4th grade?

- You and your child can attend the first 3 meetings of our Confirmation/First Eucharist program and then pick up with the family retreat. This can work very well for older grade-school or middle school children.
- OR, if your child is in high school, you can contact the parish office and we will arrange for either a small-group or individual preparation at a high-school level. Your child would be prepared to be confirmed at the same Mass as the Confirmation/First Eucharist children in the Spring

How can I make sure my child will be ready to receive the Sacraments?

- Attend Mass as a family every Sunday and other Holy Day of Obligation—discuss the readings and lessons from the Homily, explain and model reverence and participation in the Mass (age-appropriate of course!), express your eagerness to attend Mass
- Pray together as a family at home—in a variety of ways and incorporating some of our uniquely Catholic practices and devotions
- Teach your child about Jesus Christ and the Catholic faith—books, videos, religious instruction, and religious art (visual and music) are all helpful. Formed.org is a treasure—be sure to use it!
- Model a Catholic faith that is a priority for you, that is lively and growing—and demonstrate your own love for frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist

How do I register for Sacramental Preparation?

- Complete the registration form—you can find it on our parish website, in the Gathering Space of Church, in the Parish Office or request that it be emailed to you directly (contact Marie Bricher: mbricher@dioceseofspokane.org)
- If your child wasn't baptized at St. Mary Catholic Church, you will need to provide a copy of their baptismal certificate