

RE: Preparing children and youth for the sacraments

Dear Parents:

Welcome to a new year of Catholic education and faith formation for your child! Did you know:

- Each year, in a Catholic school, your child will learn about many aspects of their Catholic faith— including learning about the seven sacraments.
- However, in our Archdiocese, preparing children for the celebration of their own sacraments **always occurs in the parish**, with the support of the school, and:
 - preparing for First Reconciliation, followed by First Eucharist typically takes place when children are about seven years old and in Grade Two
 - preparing for Confirmation typically takes place when children are about 12 years old and in Grade 6.
- Children who are older than these ages and have yet to receive a sacrament (Baptism, First Eucharist, and/or Confirmation) can still participate in a preparation process. Contact the parish to determine the best process for your child (see contact information below).

Preparing people to receive sacraments is a time-honoured practice of the Church. Faith formation is a lifelong process. Sacraments are milestones—signposts— along this faith journey. They are like road signs that guide us on the way to holiness, continually point us towards Christ, and ultimately lead us to our final destination which is heaven. Every time we participate in one of these sacred moments, we encounter Christ.

Are you seeking for your child to celebrate a sacrament, such as Baptism, First Communion or Confirmation? Are you ready to help them live out the promise they make when they do?

Parents, St. Stephen Parish, and our school are each involved in preparing your child for a Catholic sacrament. It is a group effort, and everyone has a role:

- As a parent, the Church has always held that you are the primary teacher of the faith for your child. You teach them about God; you set the example; you talk about your own faith; and you bring them to Mass.
- The place where the sacraments are celebrated and lived is the Catholic parish. The people of God in that place are part of the Body of Christ. Being in relationship with the parish community (with all its weaknesses and strengths) is essential for your life of faith. The preparation for and celebration of the sacraments happens in the parish church.
- **You must sign your child up for preparation at the parish.** The school doesn't do this part of the process.
- Catholic schools are a special place for children to learn more about Jesus Christ, to practice living in a community of faith, and to develop and deepen a relationship with Christ.

Our entire faith community is eager to walk beside you and your children during this very special time. To find out more, please contact:

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