



St. Agnes Parish

2011-12 Handbook on First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

You are here tonight because your student is beginning his/her second year of preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. We thank you for your renewed commitment to this very special time in your student's faith journey. We pray that your journey of faith will be enriched immensely by experiencing this process with your student, as well!

The sacramental life is central to who we are as Catholic followers of Jesus Christ. Students will be prepared for their First Reconciliation and First Communion through a minimum of two consecutive years of Faith Formation, in which the second year includes sacrament preparation sessions in addition to attending at least 15 youth nights (unless they are enrolled in Catholic school). Many sessions require attendance by at least one parent or guardian. All dates, times and attendees are listed on the class schedule.

Note: Confirmation preparation will begin in 9th and continue in 10th grade, with the Sacrament of Confirmation received at the end of 10th grade. This policy was established by Bishop Frank J. Dewane, Diocese of Venice in May 2009.

Parent's Checklist

1. Sign-in at today's meeting and make sure you have these items before leaving:
 - Completed family registration as members of St. Agnes parish.
 - Completed student registration for Faith Formation/Sacrament Preparation.
 - Calendar of sessions.
 - Handbook on First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion Preparation.
 - Completed Parent Commitment for Sacrament Preparation of their Student form (which is the last page of the handbook, please sign and return this form tonight).

2. Please submit the following items by the next meeting (**10/24/11**):
 - A copy of your child's Baptismal certificate.
 - Communion Certificate Information Form (from the handbook).
 - If you did not attend Faith Formation at St. Agnes last year, a letter (or report card) from the church/school your child attended religious education last year (**2010-11** school year).
 - Pay fees. There is a sacrament fee of \$75 payable to St. Agnes Parish. Or make an appointment with the Director today if you need a partial of full scholarship.

St. Agnes Catholic Church

Faith Formation and Sacrament Preparation Behavior and Dress Code

No chewing gum, candy, food, or drinks are allowed in the church or chapel. Please leave all electronic devices (radios/tape players, hand-held computer toys, I-Pods, MP-3 players, etc.) at home. As a courtesy to those around you and the sacredness of the event, please silence your cell phones until dismissal. It is critical to take good care of church property. Any damage to church property must be repaired or replaced at the expense of the offender. Parent cooperation to teach respect for property, materials, furnishings, equipment and the building itself is vital. This applies to inside all church buildings as well as the outside campus. There are specific areas of the church campus that are sacred places of prayer and meditation that deserve the utmost reverence. Those places include the Eucharistic Reservation Room, Columbarium and Memorial Garden, Stations of the Cross, Mary Grotto, and water features. Please refrain from horseplay and climbing especially in these areas so as to allow veneration at all times. These areas provide parents (and grandparents) with teachable moments to their children about holiness and respect for God.

Members and guests of all ages are asked to observe modest dress and its effect upon the sacred environment. Good taste is knowing where and when to wear the appropriate clothing and accessories. Since the parents provide the funds, guidance, and upkeep of the children's clothing worn at church, it is the responsibility of the parents to see that grooming reflects the modesty and good taste expected at all church functions.

- Safe footwear shall be worn at all times. No rubber flip-flops or bedroom slippers.
- No bare skin should be exposed at the waist, abdomen, back, cleavage or shoulders. Shoulder straps must be at least two inches in width. Halter tops, strapless tops, muscle shirts are not appropriate. Clothing must cover the chest area to ensure that cleavage is not exposed.
- The length of skirts/dresses and shorts should pass the "fingertip test." If your fingertips touch the skin when the arms are held straight at the sides, then the clothing item is too short and should not be worn. Costumes, sleepwear or other clothing/adornment that creates a distraction from the sacredness of the event is not permitted. Shorts and pants must be fitted or cinched so as to not slip or reveal undergarments.
- Intentionally altered clothing or unbuttoned and ill-fitted garments are not acceptable. Ill-fitted garments include, but are not limited to, garments that are too small so as to reflect immodest or too large so as to appear to be falling off the body. Transparent, mesh or see-through clothing may not be worn without other appropriate clothing underneath. Clothing shall be free of inflammatory, suggestive or other inappropriate writing, advertisement, or artwork.
- Hats or other head coverings shall not be worn in the church buildings, except for those that are worn for religious purposes. Hair shall be clean and neatly groomed. Hair color and style shall not create a distraction from the sacredness of the event.
- Body piercing in any visible body part other than the ears should not be displayed if it presents a health/safety issue, reflects poor taste, or creates a distraction from the sacredness of the event.

First Communion Dress Code. We suggest that in preparing for this special day you keep in mind the real meaning of the celebration of this beautiful sacrament and try to keep the wardrobe in its proper perspective. Your son/daughter should wear whatever you consider to be "dressed up" best attire. Athletic footwear is inappropriate/unacceptable.

For boys, a white button down dress shirt (short or long sleeved), dress pants and a neck/bow tie of any color are appropriate. A sport coat is optional.

For girls, a white dress is not required. Any modest dress suitable for a special occasion is appropriate. Ankle-length dresses are inappropriate as children might trip and injure themselves. Slacks are unacceptable. Veils are optional; we recommend that it be simple, short, and securely fastened. Above all, the headpiece should not be a distraction to her or to anyone around her during the ceremony. Gloves should not be worn.

Confirmation Dress Code is the same as the First Communion dress code above for boys and girls (except no veil is to be worn). The most important consideration is to have your child wear something tasteful and modest, that is not a distraction to them or to others during the ceremony.

Frequently Asked Questions About First Reconciliation

What does the Church ask of parents in sacramental preparation?

The Church views the role of parents in the religious formation of children as both a privilege and an obligation. When you presented your child to the Church for baptism, you were distinctly reminded that you have the responsibility of "raising them in the practice of the faith" (Rite of Baptism). This obligation and privilege extend to sacramental preparation.

What does my child need to know?

- A child needs to know the difference between right and wrong.
 - The child needs to understand that accidents or mistakes are not sins.
 - When we deliberately choose to do what is wrong and turn away from God, we sin.
 - God is loving and merciful. God will always forgive us if we ask.
 - Jesus has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation through which our sins are forgiven and we receive the grace to live as God's children.
 - We must be willing to forgive others, just as God forgives us.
-

How can I tell if my child is ready for first reconciliation?

There are many indicators of readiness for first reconciliation, most of which are intangible. As a parent, listen carefully to what your child says about wrongdoing and misbehavior. Encourage the child to take responsibility for his/her behavior rather than blaming others. Watch to see if your child is capable of being sorry and asking forgiveness of others without your prompting. Then, ask yourself the following:

- Is prayer a part of your child's life?
 - Does your child have the capacity for sincere sorrow and make an honest effort to do better?
 - Can your child express sorrow and describe wrongdoing in his/her own words?
-

How can I encourage my child's participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation beyond "first" reconciliation?

- Plan a family party to celebrate your child's first reconciliation. By acknowledging the importance of this event, you convey its value into the future.
- During this time of preparation, you are talking with your child about what constitutes a sin. Continue these conversations as your child grows older. Initiate discussions about the temptations in your child's life. How can those temptations be addressed? As children grow into adolescence they are faced with many decisions and temptations, and they need their parent's guidance to help them make good choices and avoid sin.
- As a family, plan to participate in parish celebrations of reconciliation during Lent and Advent each year. If you make this a serious commitment, and plan ahead, even your teen-agers can arrange their schedules accordingly.
- What is your attitude toward this sacrament? As a parent, if you participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, your child will most likely want to do so as well.

Frequently Asked Questions About First Communion

What does the Church ask of parents in sacramental preparation?

The Church views the role of parents in the religious formation of children as both a privilege and an obligation. When you presented your child to the Church for baptism, you were distinctly reminded that you have the responsibility of "raising them in the practice of the faith" (Rite of Baptism). This obligation and privilege extend to sacramental preparation.

How will I know if my child is ready for Eucharist?

The first question to ask yourself is, "Is my child at Mass regularly?" If your child is at Mass each Sunday and is capable of paying attention to what is going on, that's the first step. The second question to ask is, "Does my child have a sincere desire to share in the Eucharist?" When children attend mass regularly, eventually they want to participate more fully. This is a logical progression that leads the child to ask, "When can I go to communion?" Finally, ask yourself, "Does my child understand that this consecrated bread and wine is truly the body and blood of Jesus?"

Are there prayers my child should learn?

As children come to readiness for first communion, they should be learning the acclamations, responses, and prayers of the Mass. Initially, a child will learn to pray the "Our Father" with the rest of the assembly at Mass. Then gradually, a child should be able to sing or pray the Holy, Holy, Holy, the memorial acclamation, and the great amen, and other brief responses. Children can learn these simply by being at Mass and hearing them every week.

How should my child behave at mass?

As your child now begins to share in the Eucharist, remind him/her that he/she is an important part of the community gathered at Mass. Encourage your child to participate in the music and prayers, rather than bring along a prayer book or toys. Remind your child that at Mass we sing, and pray, and we are quiet sometimes. Help your child to receive the Eucharist with reverence. Even the most agreeable and well-behaved children need to be reminded of these things often. Practice and anticipate the sacrament by having your child come forward in the Communion line with arms crossed over their chest, like an "X", to receive a blessing from the priest or Eucharistic Minister. Also, all children who have not yet received their first communion are asked to come forward for a blessing by the priest right before the closing hymn.

What is the Church's rule about fasting before going to communion?

Church law requires Catholics to fast from food and beverages for one hour before going to communion.

Other rules to keep in mind:

Please no food or drink in the main sanctuary. Silence cell phones. Stay for the whole Mass. The Mass is ended at the final hymn and the priest leaves the worship space. Please park only in designated parking spaces with painted lines/tires stops. Avoid all curbs and grassy areas at the outer edges of the property. Dress and behavior code is on a separate sheet and includes the proper dress code for First Communion.

St. Agnes Parish

7775 Vanderbilt Beach Rd., Naples, FL 34120
239-592-1949 ☩ Fax: 239-325-1150 ☩ www.StAgnesNaples.org

2011-2012 Communion Certificate Information Form

2011-2012 Formulario de información para el CERTIFICADO DE LA COMUNION

Parents: Please print neatly and do not leave any lines blank to ensure that your child's Communion certificate will be recorded and printed accurately. Return to the Faith Formation Office by

10/24/11. *Padres: Por favor escriba en letra de imprenta, claramente, y no deje ningún espacio en blanco, así el certificado de Comunión tendrá la información correcta. Devuélvalo a la oficina antes del 10/24/11*

Student attends (circle one)

St. Agnes Youth Group, Home School, or Catholic School (name) _____

El estudiante asiste a (encierra en un círculo la respuesta apropiada) El Grupo de Jóvenes de St. Agnes, o escuela católica (nombre)

Student's Full Name: _____ Grade: _____
Nombre completo del estudiante Grado

Date of Birth ___/___/___ Born in (City) _____, State _____
Fecha de Nacimiento Ciudad de nacimiento Pais Estado

Date of Baptism ___/___/___ Church of Baptism _____
Fecha de Bautismo Nombre de la Iglesia donde fue bautizado

Church of Baptism mailing address: _____
Dirección de la Iglesia donde fue bautizado

City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____
Ciudad Estado Area postal

Father's First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Nombre del padre Apellido

Mother's First Name: _____ Maiden: _____ Last Name: _____
Nombre de la madre Apellido de soltera Apellido

St. Agnes Church 50-50 Partnership

The clergy & staff of St. Agnes Parish make the following promises to your family:

- 1) St. Agnes promises to make the Sunday Mass the focal point of parish life. We welcome any and all families—no matter their life situation—to actively participate.
- 2) The St. Agnes parish bulletin provides a “Question of the Week” arising from the next Sunday’s readings on which you can reflect as a family in preparation for Mass.
- 3) St. Agnes offers a quality faith formation curriculum (Faith First for Families, MS and HS Youth Group) that is approved by the local bishop and faithful to Catholic teaching. We promise to provide the necessary training for the catechists to carry out their work in our parish.
- 4) All faith formation sessions are planned to be meaningful activities designed to deepen your student’s connection to the Catholic faith.
- 5) St. Agnes promises to be a resource for those families whose students are preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Communion. This includes various sessions, retreats, special events, rehearsals, and celebrations of these rites of initiation into the Catholic Church.
- 6) St. Agnes provides various opportunities for your family to serve the ill, the poor, the rejected, and the suffering, both in and outside our parish family.
- 7) In summary, St. Agnes Parish dedicates itself to you, the community of believers, so that all may experience conversion and growth in the Catholic faith.

The _____ family promises, to the best of our ability, to:

- 1) Actively participate in Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation on a regular basis.
- 2) Support our student’s attendance of Parish and Diocesan events.
- 3) Attend any additionally required meetings, rehearsals, and retreats necessary to our student’s faith formation and sacrament preparation. This includes keeping in communication with the Faith Formation office regarding tardiness, absences, and special needs.
- 4) Set aside time as a family for faith formation and/or sacrament preparation homework.
- 5) Seek ways to live and share our Catholic faith every day.
- 6) Regardless of sacraments received or yet to be received (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion) we promise to continue our family’s faith formation because we understand that faith formation is a lifetime process of ongoing conversion at every age.

*As a family, please read and sign this partnership.
Display it in a prominent place in your home as a reminder of your commitment to one another.*



St. Agnes Parish

Parent Commitment for Sacrament Preparation of their Child

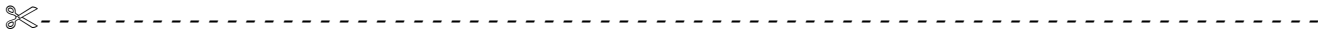
Please read carefully before checking off & signing at the bottom.
Return the bottom portion to the Faith Formation Office tonight.

I received a copy of the Sacramental Preparation Packet containing the required forms and schedules.

I understand the mutual support and partnership that my family is participating in through the St. Agnes Parish Community.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IS FOR "A WAY OF LIFE." I understand that sacramental preparation is for *a way of life*, not for a single event, and that it is most effective when a sacramental life is modeled in the family. I am willing to make the commitment to participate regularly at Sunday liturgies with my child in addition to us both attending all related sacramental and faith formation meetings, classes, retreats, and rehearsals to the best of our ability. I realize that failure to support my child's preparation in the home or excessive absences (as determined by the Faith Formation Director) could result in postponement of a sacrament until a later time.

FAITH FORMATION IS A "LIFETIME PROCESS." I understand that regardless of sacraments received or yet to be received, I promise to continue my child's faith formation because I understand that faith formation is a lifetime process of ongoing conversion at every age.



I attended the Parent Sacramental Preparation Information meeting on (circle one)

August 28 (Spanish) Sept. 26 other _____

By signing below, I understand and agree with all the above statements.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Print) Parent/Guardian Name _____

(Print) Student's Full Name _____