

ST. MATTHEW CATHOLIC CHURCH

PREPARING FOR FIRST HOLY EUCHARIST

PARENT RESOURCE GUIDE

2026

WELCOME

We are truly excited to support you in preparing your child for the first time they will receive the sacred Body and precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over the coming weeks, the children will learn about the awesome gift that Jesus gives to us; the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is His true presence here on earth.

In addition, the children will explore all parts of the Mass and will be introduced to the music, readings and responses that will be a part of the Mass of First Communion. We look forward to continuing this sacramental journey with your family.

With joy,

Lori Mathews

MY COMMUNION PRAYER

Dear God,

I know that You give me many gifts.

The gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ in Holy Communion is the greatest of all.

How can I ever thank You enough for this special gift?

At Mass we are called to be like Jesus, by loving and serving one another in the world.

As I become more like Him, please continue to help me. Show me the places and ways that I can bring Your love, kindness, and peace to others in my family, in my neighborhood, in my community, and with my friends.

I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Prayer taken from Our Sunday Visitor*



**I AM THE
BREAD OF LIFE**

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THE EUCHARIST: WHAT WE BELIEVE

One of the three sacraments of Initiation, “**the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life**” (CCC1324). This is why as Catholics, one of the most important things we do is come together to celebrate Mass. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and told his followers, “Do this in memory of Me.” Mass is the heart and soul of our worship of God. It is the celebration that gives us the strength we need to live a Christian life. Because of its importance, the Church places a serious obligation on all its members to take part in the Mass each Sunday and on holy days.

Eucharist is Jesus’ true presence here on earth. Although a mystery, we as Catholics **accept on faith the fact that bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus because Jesus told us this is so.** “The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine. ; it is Jesus himself.” (CCC 1374)

For a more in-depth exploration: [The Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers, USCCB](#)

DO THIS IN
MEMORY OF ME.

JOHN 6:35

UNDERSTANDING THE EUCHARIST ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the resources on Formed which can be accessed through this link: [FORMED](#)

- You’ll need to set up a free account to access Formed.
- Kids, check out the Brother Francis videos on Formed.org including [The Mass: A Life Giving Prayer and Bread of Life: Celebrating the Eucharist](#)

Additional Resources to help explain the Eucharist to your child:

[Busted Halo—Holy Eucharist](#)

Additional Resources for a Parent’s refresher on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist:

[Bishop Barron on the Sacrament of the Eucharist as Real Presence](#)

[Busted Halo: Advanced 201 Eucharist What We Believe](#)

THE MASS: IN THE LITURGICAL YEAR

Like the natural seasons, the Church has seasons too. They are called liturgical seasons. One of the clearest signs of these seasons is the changing liturgical colors. With each change of seasons, the Church changes the color of vestments (clothing worn by the priest, or celebrant, and cloths adorning the altar).

The following colors are used:

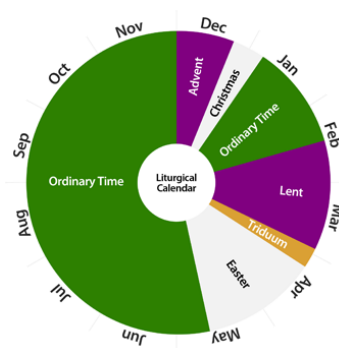
Green is a symbol of hope and life. This is the color worn during ordinary time.

White is a sign of joy and celebration. This is the color worn during the seasons of Christmas and Easter, and for some designated Holy Days. This is also the color worn for sacramental celebrations, such as baptism, First Eucharist, holy orders and marriage. It is also worn for funerals, in honor, memorial and celebration of a person's life in Christ.

Violet (Purple) represents penance and reflection. This color is used during the seasons of Lent and Advent. It is also seen during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Rose is the color of joy and the promise of light. We see this color only two times during the year, on the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday).

Red symbolizes the blood of Christ and martyrs of the Church, it also represents the Holy Spirit. The priest will wear red on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Pentecost. It is also worn for the feast days of martyrs, and for the Sacrament of Confirmation.



THE MASS: IN THE CHURCH BUILDING



What began in the homes of the early Christians has evolved into the celebration in the beautiful physical structures of Catholic Churches all over the world. As you enter St. Matthew Church look around you.

The Nave is the main space within the church where the congregation sits. The other rooms in the church are the **Narthex**, or “lobby” area; the **Vesting Room** where the vestments (clothing worn by the priests, deacons or altar servers) are kept; and the **Work Sacristy** where the items used for communion and the celebration of the Mass are kept.



The Sanctuary is the elevated space within the church where the **Main Altar** resides. The Altar is the large, high table where the Eucharist is celebrated. It is “dressed” with a white **Altar Cloth**, and may be adorned with the colors of the Liturgical season.

A Lectern (ambo) is the place where the readings are done, Gospel proclaimed, and the homily given. It is located to the left of the altar. In many churches, like ours, there is also a lectern to the right side from which announcements are made and is used by the cantor.

The Paschal Candle is the large, white candle by the **Baptismal Font** which contains holy water. Each Easter, a new candle is blessed and brought into the Church. The candle is lit during the Easter season, for baptisms and for funerals. Otherwise it remains unlit.

The Cross or Crucifix is placed near the altar and on the altar, to remind us of God’s love and sacrifice for us.



The Tabernacle is a safe, locked vessel which holds a place of prominence near the altar. This is where the consecrated hosts (Christ) are placed following communion. Christ is present when the **Sanctuary Lamp**, or red candle by the Tabernacle, is lit.

PREPARING FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE MASS

Just as you would prepare to host guests at a celebration with a meal in your home, preparations are made before each celebration of the Mass.

The Sacristan is the person who prepares the items needed for the celebration of the Mass. This includes:

- Lighting the **altar candles**;
- Preparing the table which holds the gifts (**ciborium with unconsecrated hosts and a cruet of wine**) to be brought forward;
- Preparing the **Credence Table** to the side of the altar which holds **ciborium with unconsecrated hosts and wine** which will be brought to the altar for consecration at communion time.
- Setting out the vessels that the priest uses for the Eucharist:
 - The **Chalice** to hold the wine that will become the Precious Blood,
 - The **Paten** which holds the bread that will become the Body of Christ,
 - A **Corporal** to collect any crumbs or spills, and
 - A **Purificator**, a linen cloth which is used to wipe clean the Chalice and the Paten



I WILL BE
WITH YOU
ALWAYS.”

MATTHEW
28:20

The Priest prepares by wearing special **vestments**. The wearing of vestments arose at the same time the celebration of the Mass was moved into church buildings as a way for people to tell who the various ministers were. The vestments we see the most are:

- An **Alb** is the first garment placed on by the priest, and is long and white. This is also what is seen being worn by **Altar Servers**.
- The **Cinture** is the cord tied around the waist of an alb.
- The **Stole** is a narrow cloth, similar to a scarf, draped around the neck of the priest. It symbolizes the authority given by the church and sacredness of his role.
- The **Chasuble** is the outer garment, similar to a poncho, and will match the color of the liturgical seasons.



PREPARING FOR MASS: THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION



As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. We are encouraged to receive Communion frequently and devoutly. In order to be properly prepared to receive, one should not be conscious of a grave sin, and should have fasted for one hour prior. The best practice is to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation with enough frequency to have a clear heart and conscious when coming to receive our Lord in the Eucharist.

PREPARING FOR MASS: ENTERING THE CHURCH

Each person coming to Mass should prepare and respect the holy place they are entering. Here are some ways you and your child can prepare:



- When first entering the **Church**, stop and dip the fingers of your right hand in the **Holy Water Font** placed by each of the entrances, and then make the **Sign of the Cross**.
- As you choose a place to be sit during Mass, be aware of your child's perspective. The more they can see, the more engaged they will be.
- Before entering your **pew**, turn towards the **Tabernacle** and **genuflect**. This is a sign of reverence towards Christ, and is done by kneeling on one knee and making the Sign of the Cross.
- Once in your pew, take a moment to kneel and talk quietly with God. This also gives your mind and body a moment to transition from the noise of the world to the peace of the Mass.

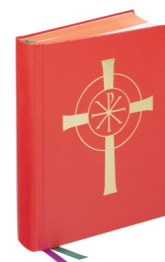
THE ORDER OF MASS: INTRODUCTORY RITES

- **Procession.** We stand as the presiding priest and other ministers enter the assembly. We sing a gathering song. The priest kisses the altar. He then goes to the chair where he presides over the celebration.
- **Greeting.** The priest leads us in praying the Sign of the Cross together. The priest greets us and we say, "And with your spirit."
- **Penitential Rite.** "*I confess to Almighty God...*" We admit our wrongdoings. We thank God for his mercy and ask for prayers.
- **Gloria.** "*Glory to God in the Highest*" We praise God for all the good he has done for us (this is omitted during Advent and Lent).
- **Opening Prayer.** The priest leads us in praying the Opening Prayer. We respond, "Amen."

IN THE NAME
OF THE FATHER,
AND OF THE
SON AND OF
THE HOLY SPIR-
IT.
AMEN

THE ORDER OF MASS: LITURGY OF THE WORD

- **First Reading.** Read by lector usually from the Old Testament or from the Acts of the Apostles.
- **Responsorial Psalm.** The cantor leads us in singing a psalm. This helps us think about what we heard in the first reading.
- **Second Reading.** The lector reads from the New Testament, but not from the four Gospels. Daily Mass usually omits this reading.
- **Gospel Acclamation.** "*Alleluia!*" The cantor sings it first and the congregation repeats. We stand to honor Christ present with us in the Gospel. (During Lent the word alleluia is omitted).
- **Gospel.** Taken from one of the four Gospels, it is read by a priest or deacon, never by a layperson.
- **Homily.** Delivered by priest or deacon, explaining the Scriptures and it's application of what it means to us.
- **Profession of Faith.** "*I believe in one God...*" All join in this declaration of beliefs. We pray the Nicene Creed.
- **Prayer of the Faithful.** "*Lord, hear our prayer.*" Also known as General Intercessions. We are lead in praying for those in need.



THE WORD
OF THE LORD.

THANKS BE TO
GOD.



“TAKE AND EAT
FOR THIS IS MY
BODY.

THEN HE TOOK
THE CUP AND
SAID, “DRINK IT
ALL OF YOU,
THIS IS MY
BLOOD, WHICH
SEALS GOD’S
COVENANT.”

MATTHEW 26:
26-28

ORDER OF MASS: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- **Preparation of the Altar Gifts.** This is also called the offertory. We sit as the altar table is prepared, the collection is taken up, and the gifts of bread & wine are brought forward.
- **Eucharistic Prayer.** The priest invites us to join in praying the Church’s great prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father. We stand, then kneel for this prayer. During this prayer the ordinary bread and ordinary wine, become the extraordinary body and blood of our Lord.
- **Communion Rite.** This part begins with the *Our Father*, followed by the Sign of Peace. After praying the Lamb of God, we receive the sacred body of Christ in the consecrated host.

ORDER OF MASS: CONCLUDING RITE

- **Greeting and Blessing.** *“In the name of the Father...”*
- **Dismissal.** *“Thanks be to God!”* We are sent forth to do good works, praising and blessing the Lord.
- **Recessional.** We stand as the altar servers and the priest leave the altar. Out of respect, we do not leave our pews until the priest has fully recessed out of the Nave.

ORDER OF MASS: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Order of the Mass, USCCB](#)

[The How-To Book of the Mass, by Mike Dubruiel](#)

[What’s Happening in Mass?, Busted Halo](#)



RECEIVING COMMUNION

This is how we receive the Body of Christ.

- Prepare your heart to welcome Jesus with folded hands.
- As the person before you is receiving the Body of Christ, *bow in reverence to our Lord.*
- You can choose to **receive the Host in your hand.**
 - ◊ *Extend your hands* with palms facing up, dominant hand below the other hand.
 - ◊ When you hear the words, “*The Body of Christ,*” answer, “*Amen.*”
 - ◊ After the Host is placed in your cupped hand *reverently pick up the Host with the hand on the bottom (dominant hand) and place it in your mouth.* Consume the Host, prepare to receive the Blood of Christ or return to your seat with your hands folded.
- You can choose to **receive the Host on your tongue.**
 - ◊ After you answer “Amen,” open your mouth and *extend your tongue with your head held up.*
 - ◊ After the Host is placed on your tongue close your mouth and consume the Host. Prepare to receive the Blood of Christ or return to your seat with your hands folded.

This is how we receive the Blood of Christ.

- As the cup is extended towards you, when you hear the words, “*The Blood of Christ.*” You reply, “*Amen.*”
- Take the cup with your own hands and reverently bring the cup to your mouth.
- Take a small amount of the Blood of Christ and then carefully give the cup back using both hands.

[Busted Halo—Holy Eucharist: How to Receive](#)

AFTER RECEIVING COMMUNION

Jesus is within you now. Kneel and quietly share whatever is on your heart with Him. Give thanks, ask for help or just quietly rejoice in his presence within you.

Remain kneeling, and sing the Communion song with your parish family. Watch as the Altar table is cleaned. Watch for the **Priest or Deacon** to take the Body of Christ back to the **Tabernacle**. Once this has occurred, you may be seated until the final blessing.

COMMUNION PRAYER

MY JESUS, I BELIEVE
THAT YOU ARE
TRULY PRESENT IN
THE BLESSED
SACRAMENT. I LOVE
YOU ABOVE ALL
THINGS, AND I LONG
FOR YOU IN MY
SOUL.

AMEN

Reception of Communion by Fellow Christians and Non-Christians

As Catholics, we welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist, and pray that our common Baptism and the Holy Spirit will draw us closer and dispel the divisions which separate us. Because we believe that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist, reception of this sacrament is discouraged among those who do not share in our faith in Jesus Christ, or those whom are members of churches not fully united in the Christian, catholic faith. We do ask, during this time of the Mass, that they offer their own prayers for peace and the unity of the human family. (Code of Canon Law, canon 916 & 844)

FIRST EUCHARIST PREPARATION

PREPARING FOR FIRST EUCHARIST ELEMENTARY GRADES MASS BOOKLET

Receive (grades 2-5) and 2nd Grade MACS Students

The “Preparing for First Communion” booklet is designed to help your child participate and grow in their understanding of the Mass and the Holy Eucharist. As part of your child’s preparation, we require the Mass booklet to be returned to the Faith Formation Office.

Distributed On: Week of January 25 during faith formation sessions & at St. Matthew School

Begins: Sunday, February 1

Due Date: Bring completed booklet to First Eucharist Retreat

FIRST EUCHARIST PARENT & CHILD RETREAT

This is an important and mandatory part of your child’s preparation, and one parent is required to be present as well. Please make every effort to clear your schedule for this one of the retreat days/times. You’ll select one of the time slots on one of the retreat days. Please note, elementary grades retreat is 2 1/2 hours in length.

Receive Elementary Grades (2-5)

- Saturday, April 18 (Grades 2-5)
- Monday, April 20 (Grades 2-5)

*Elementary Grades Retreat is 2 1/2 hours in length

Receive Middle School

- Sunday, April 19 (3:30PM-7PM)

FIRST EUCHARIST BANNER—ALL FIRST COMMUNICANTS

We encourage all First Communicants take part in our beautiful St. Matthew tradition of making a First Eucharist Banner.

Materials needed may be purchased at any craft store (i.e. Michaels, A.C. Moore, Walmart).

- **9" x 12" Felt, NO LARGER & NO STICKY BACK & NO DOWELS!**
- Personalize your banner using art & materials pertaining to the Eucharist. However, please keep the weight of the banner to a minimum so it won't fall. The Eucharist Parent page will have additional information regarding the banners.
- Your child's **FIRST NAME** displayed on the banner. You can also include your child's **PHOTO**.
- Please put your child's First and Last Name on the back of the banner so we can return the banner to you.

Date due: Parent & Child Retreat



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is there a dress code?

The liturgical color for the celebration of Holy Eucharist is white.

For girls: Suggested dress code for girls is a white dress or dress shirt and slacks; shoulders should be covered (Please no spaghetti straps unless a sweater or wrap covers the shoulders.) Veils are optional. Please do not have your daughter wear gloves. (If your daughter receives on the palm of the hand, the Precious Body may only come in contact with skin.)

For boys: Suggested dress code for boys is dress pants, white dress shirt, and tie or bow tie. Sport coats/blazers or suits may also be worn but not required. Boys are welcome to wear the traditional white suit.



Where can I purchase First Communion items?

St. Matthew has a Gift Shop located in the Narthex.

See website for hours of operation.

How can I get a picture of my child receiving his/her First Communion?

A photographer will be at all First Eucharist Masses taking a picture of each child receiving First Communion. Families will receive additional information at Retreat.

When can my child and I receive Reconciliation before his/her First Communion?

Click on this link for schedule: [MASS and RECONCILIATION SCHEDULE](#)

PARENT & CHILD RETREAT

Receive Elementary Grades (2-5)

- Saturday, April 18 (Grades 2-5)
- Monday, April 20 (Grades 2-5)

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Receive Middle School

- Sunday, April 19 (3:30PM-7PM)

REHEARSALS FOR MASS OF FIRST COMMUNION

Sunday, May 3 3:30pm - 4:45pm

Monday, May 4 4pm - 5:15pm

Tuesday, May 5 4pm - 5:15pm or 6pm - 7:15pm

Wednesday, May 6 4pm – 5:15pm

MASSES OF FIRST COMMUNION

Saturday May 9, 2026

9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

Saturday May 16, 2026

9:30 AM, 11:30 AM, 2:30 PM



St. Matthew Catholic Church
Youth, Family and Sacramental Programs
2025-2026