



St. Mark's Catholic Church

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IMPORTANT FIRST RECONCILIATION & FIRST COMMUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

June 23, 2023

Re: Celebration of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion / Year 2023-2024

Dear Parent(s):

You are receiving this letter because you have a child or children who will be entering Grade 2 in the fall of 2023. As such, I want to take this opportunity to provide you with some information about the process for receiving the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion at St. Mark's Parish for students entering Grade 2 in September. **Please note** that the Sacraments of Initiation are to be celebrated and received in the family's home parish (i.e., the parish where the family attends Sunday Mass).

Children learn their faith first and foremost from their parents. It is in the home that children first learn about God and are introduced to a Christian way of life. This is considered the **Initial Preparation** for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. Those children who attend Catholic schools participate in religious education, which is also part of **this initial preparation**, as is coming to Church each Sunday to worship God and thank Him for all His blessings, especially the gift of His only Son, Jesus.

As the time for receiving these sacraments nears, the families contact the church to begin the process of **Immediate Preparation** for these sacraments.

Immediate Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion will be accomplished through a combined effort of parents, school and the parish:

Role of Parents: This year parents will be provided with two workbooks, a website link, lesson plans and guidance in order to complete the First Reconciliation and the First Communion portions of the program. It is our hope that this will be a blessed opportunity for you to spend time with your children in their faith journey, by sharing your own experiences with them to help them understand their faith better and bring them closer to God. It gives your child a chance to ask questions, understand your upbringing and why their receiving of these sacraments is so important to you. It also allows you to revisit parts of your Catholic faith that you may have forgotten, and to grow along with your child. **It is expected, of course, that you will commit to attending mass each weekend with your family.** It is the best opportunity for children to understand the parts of the mass, and to see you leading by example is the most important lesson and gift you can give them. We will also be asking parents to make a concerted **effort to make sure the children know basic prayers such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, Guardian Angel prayer as well as how to bless themselves and genuflect.**

Role of Schools: The Catholic schools will continue to teach the curriculum as it relates to religious instruction for grade 2 students.

Role of St. Mark's Parish: St. Mark's Parish will provide parents with all necessary resources to undertake their role. There will be two classes in the parish hall in preparation for Reconciliation (fall 2023) and two in preparation for First Communion (spring 2024) as well as a Retreat in March for children and parents.

Workbook and Videos

Parents will be given one workbook for First Reconciliation when they attend the Registration evening in September and a second workbook for First Communion at the November 18th class. Also, there will be online videos, which complement the workbook material that you and your child will be asked to watch, in order to reinforce the information they are learning about the Sacraments.

The **proposed dates and times** for the children to have their workbooks checked for completion, testing of knowledge of basic prayers, how to bless themselves and genuflect and to attend classes in the parish hall of St. Mark's Church are set out in the attached schedule.

Retreat and Classes

A mandatory retreat (children and parents) and four mandatory classes (children only) will take place at St. Mark's Church. The children will be split up into three groups for their classes and retreat. For those children who attend a public or private school, you will be contacted after the registration night with the group your child will be in.

We are providing you with these dates well in advance as the full program is mandatory and so that you can plan other activities with these commitments in mind. If you foresee a conflict with these dates due to other commitments such as recreational activities, vacation trips, family functions, etc., we ask that you please defer registering your child for reception of the sacraments **THIS YEAR** and wait until Grade 3 or other suitable year.

Program Dates and Sacramental First Communion Celebration Dates

Lastly, I have attached a summary of **proposed** dates related to First Reconciliation and First Communion next year. Please note that I will not be able to confirm these dates until after school begins in September – this letter is simply intended to give you as much **advance notice** as possible and to make you aware of the time commitments for both your child and your family in connection with receiving these Sacraments.

Program Requirements

All of the requirements set out in this letter, as they will be further explained to you on the first registration night, are mandatory and must be met in order for your child to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Likewise, absence at registration night or a class at the scheduled time, non-completion of workbook material, on the assigned dates or absence from the classes or retreat day may result in your child not being prepared and ready to receive the sacrament on the planned date.

If you feel that your family cannot make a commitment to attend Sunday Mass – then this is not the year to proceed. Please make note of all dates and requirements to ensure that both you and your child can complete all elements of the preparatory program.

I look forward to sharing with you in this God-given mission of leading our children to the Father through His Son in the Holy Spirit.

Yours Sincerely,



Fr. Tad Walczyk
Pastor, St. Mark's Church

Schedule of PROPOSED Dates for First Reconciliation and First Communion 2023/2024

| Date | Event | Explanation |
|---|---|--|
| Tuesday, September 12 to Tuesday, September 19 | <u>Online registration</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The registration link will be on our website stmarksst@archtoronto.org beginning September 12th. Please ensure the online registration form is completed before attending the Parent Registration Night on September 20th. |
| Wednesday, September 20, 2023 7:00-8:30 pm St. Mark's Church PARENTS ONLY | <u>Registration night</u> (St. Mark's Church) Attendance by at least one parent is <u>mandatory</u> . | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will be providing you with the tools and training you will need to assist your child. (Please plan for babysitters for your children, if necessary, as your undivided attention will be required in order to most effectively prepare you during the training session. Only one parent is required to attend, although all are welcome.) Bring registration fee (\$130) to cover First Reconciliation/First Communion program costs and a photocopy of baptismal certificate. |
| Saturday or Sunday Sept. 30 or Oct. 1, 2023 October 7 or 8, 2023 St. Mark's Church | <u>Enrolment Ceremonies</u> <i>Children will be called to come to the front of the church during the Mass to hand in their "Please Pray for Me" prayer slips.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To take place at each mass on the listed weekends. Parents can choose one of the masses they would like to attend on either weekend - Saturday at 5 pm, Sunday at 9 am or Sunday at 11 am. |
| Saturday, October 28, 2023 St. Mark's Church Hall Class Group A <u>9 am until 10:30 am</u> Class Group B <u>11 am until 12:30 pm</u> Class Group C <u>1:30 pm until 3 pm</u> | <u>First Reconciliation</u> Class #1 and Workbook Check Chapters 1, 2, 3 completed | First Reconciliation Class CHILDREN ONLY The children will attend class #1 in the First Reconciliation program (start time determined by the group they are in). Before the class the child's workbook will be checked to ensure Chapters 1 to 3 are completed. Bring your child's workbook and passport to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make checks quicker.</u> |
| Saturday, November 18, 2023 St. Mark's Church Hall Class Group A <u>9 am until 10:30 am</u> Class Group B <u>11 am until 12:30 pm</u> Class Group C <u>1:30 pm until 3 pm</u> | <u>First Reconciliation</u> Class #2 and Workbook Check Chapters 4, 5, 6 completed The second workbook for First Communion will be distributed to the children. | First Reconciliation Class CHILDREN ONLY The children will attend class #2 in the First Reconciliation program (start time determined by the group they are in). Before the class the child's workbook will be checked to ensure Chapters 4 to 6 are completed. Bring your child's workbook and passport to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes on completed pages to make checks quicker.</u> |
| Wednesday at 7 pm November 22, 2023 November 29, 2023 December 6, 2023 | <u>First Reconciliation Ceremonies</u> (St. Mark's Church) Group A Group B Group C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will make their First Reconciliation on the date assigned to their group. |

| Date | Event | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| Saturday, January 20, 2024 St. Mark's Church Hall Class Group A <u>9 am until 10:30 am</u> Class Group B <u>11 am until 12:30 pm</u> Class Group C <u>1:30 pm until 3 pm</u> | <u>First Communion</u> Class #1 and Workbook Check Chapters 1, 2, 3 completed | First Communion Class CHILDREN ONLY The children will attend class #1 in the First Communion program (start time determined by the group they are in). Before the class the child's workbook will be checked to ensure Chapters 1 to 3 are completed. Bring your child's workbook and passport to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes</u> on completed pages to make checks quicker. |
| Saturday, February 10, 2024 St. Mark's Church Hall Class Group A <u>9 am until 10:30 am</u> Class Group B <u>11 am until 12:30 pm</u> Class Group C <u>1:30 pm until 3 pm</u> | <u>First Communion</u> Class #2 and Workbook Check Chapters 4, 5, 6 completed | First Communion Class CHILDREN ONLY The children will attend class #2 in the First Communion program (start time determined by the group they are in). Before the class the child's workbook will be checked to ensure chapters 4 to 6 are completed. Bring your child's workbook and passport to St. Mark's Church to have a coordinator sign off on the completed sections. <u>Please place sticky notes</u> on completed pages to make checks quicker. |
| Saturday, February 24, 2024 St. Mark's Church Hall | <u>Snow date/makeup session for Communion classes</u> | Classes will only be held on this date if regularly scheduled classes are cancelled due to inclement weather or if a makeup class is needed. |
| Saturday, April 6, 2024 St. Mark's Church Hall Retreat Group A <u>9:30 am until 11 am</u> Retreat Group B <u>11:30 am until 1 pm</u> Retreat Group C <u>1:30 pm until 3 pm</u> | <u>First Communion Retreat</u> | CHILDREN AND PARENTS <i><u>Please arrive 10 minutes before scheduled start time of the retreat.</u></i> There will be a catechetical session for parents upstairs in the church while the children have their retreat downstairs in the parish hall. The children will also have an opportunity to practice receiving an unconsecrated host. |

First Communion Celebration Dates

| Ceremony | First Communion Ceremony Date and Time |
|------------|--|
| Ceremony 1 | Sunday, April 14, 2024 at 2 pm |
| Ceremony 2 | Sunday, April 21, 2024 at 2 pm |
| Ceremony 3 | Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 2 pm |
| Ceremony 4 | Sunday, May 5, 2024 at 2 pm |

Note:

Each child will attend the First Reconciliation and First Communion celebrations assigned to their school. Dates will be assigned in the fall. Parents of children who attend public or private schools will be contacted by email with the dates of their child's celebrations and class group after they have attended the in-person registration night on Sept. 20th.