

# St. Anthony – St. Rita Parish Faith Formation Office

August 21, 2025

Dear Parents of our First Communicants,

What an exciting year this will be for our children! I hope that your child's preparation for

First Communion is an enriching experience for the whole family. Our focus this year is to help the children understand that they belong to the Catholic Christian community because you, their parents, presented them for baptism in the church. All of us, adults and children alike, have been called through our baptism to share in the life of Christ.

**Attendance at Mass:** We expect our students to attend Mass with you to celebrate the Lord's Day with other members of the St. Anthony - St. Rita Faith Community. It is important that you act as a role model to your child by attending Mass every week. Learning by doing is essential in the education of children. To that end, we are asking that you help us by instructing your child on proper behavior at Mass. Here is what we expect each child to know:

1. How to make the Sign of the Cross.
2. How to bless themselves with Holy Water.
3. How to genuflect, i.e., when you reach the pew where you will sit, touch one knee to the floor, facing the tabernacle, and bow your head. This is to show reverence for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist which reposes in the tabernacle.

*Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these..." Matthew 19:14*

4. Upon entering the pew, your child should kneel upright (no leaning back on the pew) to say a few prayers and meditate on the reason for being at Mass. Namely, to give glory and praise to our God; and to be joined with Him in Communion.

5. No extraneous conversations. We realize that young children need to speak what comes into their head as soon as the thought occurs. However, the goal is to teach them that the only time we should hear their voices at Mass is when they are praying or singing. This takes patience and many false starts. But they will eventually understand.

6. Your child should be able to follow the Mass. A helpful exercise: Choose a part of the Mass at random. For example, tell your child to listen for the words, "Lord, hear our prayer" or "Through him, with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever." 7. They may go up at Communion time to receive a blessing. To indicate that they have not received First Communion, we ask that they cross their hands over their chest so that the priest or Eucharist Minister knows not to give them Communion.

8. Ways to help your family get to Mass every week:

**Write it on the calendar!** Many of us would be lost without the weekly calendar of family activities. Why not find a Saturday evening or a Sunday Mass time that fits the family's schedule? Write it on the calendar. Make other activities fit around the Mass time you have chosen.

**Stay matter-of-fact:** Faith development is as important as learning reading or math. Approach going to Mass with your children as you do going to school. This is what we do. It is non-negotiable.

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**Prayers:** Please make this a part of your daily routine, if it isn't already. Prayers that your child should know at this age are the **Sign of the Cross**, the **Our Father**, **Hail Mary**, **Glory to the Father**, and the **Act of Contrition**. Please begin to practice the Act of Contrition now. It is usually not part of daily prayers, but they must know it by the time they receive First Reconciliation in January.

Since our time with the children is limited, and you, their parents, are your child's first teachers, prayer time at home is very important. Pray with them often! Do not just have them memorize the prayers. Memorization will come with the daily repetition. The prayers listed on the last page.

**My Prayer for you:** Merciful God, bless these men and women whom You have chosen to be parents. Strengthen them for this beautiful and difficult calling. May they turn themselves anew to You so that they may find for themselves what they need for their children; and that through them, their children may know Your love. May they inspire and guide their children to a solid faith foundation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Peace,

Mary Arikian Chaplain

Director of Faith Formation

St. Anthony - St. Rita of Parish

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# PRAYERS

## *Sign of the Cross*

In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

## *Our Father*

Our Father, who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses, as  
we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver from evil. Amen

## *Hail Mary*

Hail Mary, full of grace  
The Lord is with you  
Blessed are you among women  
and blessed is the fruit of your  
womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God  
pray for us sinners, now  
and at the hour of our death.  
Amen

## *Act of Contrition*

O my God, I am sorry for my sins  
with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong  
and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you  
whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend with your help,  
to do penance, to sin no more  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Amen

## *Glory be to the Father*

Glory be to the Father, and to  
the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
Is now, and ever shall be. Amen

*Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these..." Matthew 19:14*