

Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church  
**Office of Religious Education**  
46639 Algonkian Parkway  
Potomac Falls, VA 20165  
(703) 433-6564

September 23, 2018

Dear Parents,

This year is an important time in the life of your child, who will receive the Sacraments of First Penance and Holy Communion. What a great gift God has given us in these two Sacraments! The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “The Holy Eucharist completes Christian Initiation. It is the source and summit of the Christian life.” At this time, we are reminded of our own First Holy Communion and the tremendous love God has for each of us. Through the gift of the Holy Eucharist, our Lord gives Himself to us – His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity under the appearance of bread and wine.

As we prepare the children in the coming months, we will be helping them to be disposed to the many graces they will receive. We want them to have the special life-long closeness to Our Lord who awaits them in the sacraments.

Enclosed is a packet of information regarding the reception of your child’s first Penance and Holy Communion. We ask that you mark your calendar for the important mandatory dates listed on the following pages. Please fill out the application form and submit a copy of your child’s **Baptismal certificate** and the **Administrative fee** of \$100.00 by December 1, 2018.

We are happy to be working with you in helping your child come to a deeper faith in Jesus Christ and His Church. The Church teaches that as parents you are the primary religious educators of your children. We cannot replace you, but we are delighted to help you. Please give us a call if you have any questions.

May God bless you,



Jackie Regan  
Director of Religious Education

### **PARENT MEETINGS**

There are two scheduled parent meetings for children preparing for the Sacraments. The first meeting on September 23, 2018 familiarizes parents with the entire preparation process. The second meeting on January 27, 2019 will feature a talk by Fr. Saunders on the Sacrament of Penance, which the children will soon be receiving. *At least one parent must attend each meeting; your child does not have to be present.*

### **APPLICATION AND PREPARATION POLICY AGREEMENT**

These forms indicate to the Pastor your desire to have your child prepare for and receive the great Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. By reading the agreement and signing your name, you affirm that you will abide by the program policy.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE FEE**

A fee of \$100.00 is charged to cover the cost of the class portrait with the parish priests, as well as costs associated with the retreat, certificates, parish gifts and reception. The fee is due December 1, 2018.

### **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE**

Please submit a copy of your child's baptismal certificate to the Religious Education Office by December 1, 2018.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES**

Religious Education Classes are a vital part of preparation for reception of the Sacraments. The children are required to attend Religious Education classes on a weekly basis and to pass the assessments given prior to each Sacrament. **More than three unexcused absences may delay reception of the Sacraments until the following year.** OLOH School children will follow the requirements outlined by the School.

### **WORKBOOKS ON THE SACRAMENTS**

Each student will receive a *Penance Workbook*, "My Booklet about God's Love and Forgiveness" and a *Holy Communion Workbook*, "My Booklet about the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist." These workbooks are designed for you to complete with your child at home. Each section in the workbook contains a story, discussion questions and activity. Read the story and go over the discussion questions with your child. **Only the activity portion needs to be written out.** The student must do the actual writing and drawing.

### **MASS ATTENDANCE FORMS – SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION**

Sunday Mass is the "Source and Summit" of our Catholic faith. Attending Mass as a family with your children is the greatest gift you can give to them. Mass Attendance Forms must be completed **weekly**. Please work with your children to complete these forms. Additional forms can be obtained from your child's catechist, emailed to you or downloaded from the parish website. Please note: You can attend Mass at any parish – in the local area or out of state – just list the name of the parish on the form. If your child is sick and cannot attend Mass, please write a note on the Mass form stating the reason for not attending. At the end of each month, Mass Attendance Form logs are reviewed by staff. Failure to comply with this requirement may cause reception of both First Penance and First Holy Communion to be delayed until the following school year.

## **PRAYERS TO BE TAUGHT**

Several prayers are reviewed and emphasized in class during this important year. Please assist your child with the memorization and understanding of these prayers: Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be, Grace Before Meals and the Act of Contrition. Additionally, the Sign of the Cross and genuflection must be done correctly.

## **FIRST PENANCE**

The example of parents and other adults celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in joy and with meaning, teaches the child to appreciate this opportunity to seek God's forgiveness, and to deepen his or her relationship with Him. A positive attitude toward Penance is caught rather than formally "taught." A child's desire to receive the Sacrament of Penance will depend greatly upon the degree of importance his/her family places upon this Sacrament.

Please help prepare your child for confession by going over the Ten Commandments, an examination of conscience, the Act of Contrition, and how to make a good confession. **The Act of Contrition and the form of the Sacrament must be memorized by the young penitent.**

The Sacrament of Penance will take place during the class session. Those students who attend CCD will make their First Penance on Tuesday, March 12, 2019. For students enrolled at Our Lady of Hope Catholic School, the Sacrament of Penance will be Thursday, March 7, 2019. First Penance for homeschooled students will be on March 12, 2019 during the 4:15 P.M. session.

The children may go to Confession face-to-face or kneel behind the screen. Please discuss this choice with your child. After leaving the confessional, the children should go quietly to a place in the Church to pray and do their penance.

## **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION RETREAT**

There will be a retreat on a Saturday, May 4, 2019, from 8:00 A.M. to approximately 12:30 P.M. in the Our Lady of Hope School. This will be an opportunity for your child to focus on Jesus, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Mass, and prayer. Father Saunders will give a presentation about church signs, symbols, and vestments. This retreat is **mandatory** for Sacramental preparation at Our Lady of Hope Parish.

## **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PRACTICE**

There will be a **mandatory** practice session for all First Communion children on Thursday, May 9, 2019, at 5:30 P.M. Please assemble in the Parish Hall. The practice will focus on the procession into the Church, responses, and the children's overall participation in the liturgy. The children will also practice how to receive Holy Communion.

## **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASS, RECEPTION, AND DRESS CODE**

The First Holy Communion Mass will be on Saturday, May 11, 2019 at 11 A.M. for all students. *There will be absolutely no picture taking during the First Communion Mass.* A class picture will be taken with the parish priests after Mass. Following the First Communion Mass, there will be a reception with light refreshments in the Parish Hall for family and friends.

### **Dress Code**

Girls should wear white dresses with shoulders covered (no spaghetti straps or halter tops) as well as white shoes, white socks, and white veils. Boys should wear white shirts, conservative colored ties, dress pants, dress shoes, and a jacket. Gloves are not allowed, and the children are not to carry anything in their hands at Mass (i.e. purses, books, rosaries, etc.).

### **Receiving Holy Communion**

- At the children's First Holy Communion Mass all students will receive Holy Communion on the tongue, while kneeling down on a kneeler.
- After this Mass, the child may choose to receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand.
- The Communion Fast is one hour, except for water or medication.
- The children are to approach the priest with hands folded, praying to Jesus, thanking Him for the great gift that they are about to receive (the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ).

### **Receiving on the Tongue**

When the priest says, "The Body of Christ," the child responds clearly "AMEN." The child then opens his/her mouth and extends his/her tongue and receives the Holy Eucharist followed by making the sign of the cross.

After returning to their seats, the children should kneel and pray to Jesus, thanking Him for giving Himself totally to them, as well as praying for any other intentions they may have.