

Saint Bernadette Church
First Penance and First Holy Communion
Sacramental Preparation 2023-2024
FAQ and Parent Check List
First Communion Mass: Saturday, May 4th, 10am

WHAT

First Penance and First Holy Communion at Saint Bernadette Church

Our younger parishioners celebrate two essential sacraments of the Catholic faith — the sacrament of Reconciliation and the sacrament of First Holy Communion in the spring. Preparation is generally done during 2nd grade, but a student may prepare to receive these sacraments once they and their family are ready for sacramental preparation after the age of seven.

HOW

Religious Education Requirements

At Saint Bernadette, two consecutive years of religious education are required for First Communion. This is typically fulfilled in 1st and 2nd grade.

- Saint Bernadette school students receive this education during the school day.
- Students attending public school and homeschool should sign up for Religious Education classes on Sundays.
- Students attending other private Catholic schools or homeschooling with a Catholic curricula will - to fully know the gift of initiation of this sacrament - will join their parish community for faith formation in CCD during the months of January and February.

Parents are encouraged to learn more about the Sacraments and how they - as the first teachers of the faith - can support their child(ren) in their faith journey. Opportunities for parent participation in retreats and other events relating to your child's sacramental preparation will be provided.

Participating in these preparation processes may create some conflicts with athletics and other extracurricular activities. Because you and your child have chosen to receive these sacraments, please be generous in setting your priorities.

PARENT CHECKLIST

- 1. Register your child for First Holy Communion by Oct. 1st, 2023.**
 - a. All First Penance & First Communion candidates must be registered with the Religious Ed office. Registration should be completed online at: <https://silverspringcatholic.com/religious-education-submit/>
 - b. The fee for the registration for First Communion preparation is \$100. This fee covers materials, a retreat, certificates, and other costs. The fee can be paid online with a credit card. You may also select to speak with the DRE, either to pay by cash or check, or to request financial assistance.
- 2. Send in Baptismal Records by January 5th, 2024.**
 - a. If the candidate was baptized at St. Bernadette, no action is required.
 - b. All other candidates are asked to submit a newly issued Baptismal certificate as soon as possible – but no later than **January 5th, 2024**. To submit the necessary Baptismal record, contact the parish where your child was baptized (via phone, letter, or email) and request that a new certificate be sent. You can make this most direct by asking that it be sent to:

Saint Bernadette Church, Attention: Jasmine Kuzner, DRE
70 University Blvd. E., Silver Spring, MD 20901.
 - c. The baptism certificate must be a newly issued (2023/2024) official copy. It needs to include the pastor's signature and the parish seal.

3. If you are members of another parish who wish to receive FHC at St. Bernadette:

It is typically expected that children will receive sacraments at their home parish. If you are not a registered parishioner of Saint Bernadette, but would like your child to celebrate First Communion here, please ask your pastor to send a letter noting his approval to Msgr. Smith. This letter is **due by January 5th, 2024**.

4. If Your Child Was Not Baptized Catholic:

For children who were not baptized Catholic but are seeking full communion with the Catholic Church through the reception of Holy Communion, there is a special rite (the "Profession of Faith") to recognize their desire and to welcome them to the Church. Please contact the DRE to discuss this process.

5. Be Ready to Sign Up for First Confession

First confession takes place on a series of Saturdays during Lent (Lent 2024 is February 14th - March 28th). A Sign-Up Genius will be sent out in January to allow families to sign up for a Saturday. Children come with their parents just before the regular Saturday Confession time (meet at 2:45pm in the Church).

6. Family Retreat

A spiritual retreat refreshes and revitalizes, gives the opportunity for more time spent in prayer and contemplation, and rekindles and deepens one's relationship with God. In addition to a student retreat, those preparing for first penance and first Holy Communion and their families will make a family retreat. Visits to nearby shrines and other holy places are examples of retreats our parish has taken in the past.

This year, our family retreat will be at our very own parish. First penitents and their families will attend Stations of the Cross and contribute to the parish Simple Supper (there is no simple supper on Good Friday, March 29th).

As a special group whose children are receiving the sacraments of first penance and first Holy Communion as a parish community, families will choose to attend a Stations of the Cross in March (1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th). A sign-up will be sent.

7. Save the Date for the First Communion Retreat.

First Communion Retreat: Sunday April 28th from 1pm-4pm on the parish grounds. This retreat for the children will give them time together in prayer and will also be an opportunity to practice the reception of the Eucharist with Msgr. Smith.

FAQ

What Should My Child Wear?

First Communion Attire: Boys will wear a suit or dress clothes with a sports coat and tie. Colors may vary. They must wear shoes (no sneakers). Girls, in the beautiful tradition of our Church, wear a white dress as they receive Jesus for the first time. Girls should not wear gloves and should not be carrying anything in their hands at the Mass. Please see the DRE if you need any kind of assistance in obtaining an appropriate outfit.

Can photos be taken during the Mass?

We ask that no photographs be taken during the First Communion Mass. Pictures may be taken in the church after Mass. We will have a professional photographer to take pictures of the Mass. These photos will be available for purchase.

When is the FHC Mass?

Saturday, May 4th, at 10am.

When is May Crowning?

Sunday May 5th at 10:30. Children wear their First Communion attire to the 9am Mass and join the parish in the crowning of Mary and the recitation of the rosary. Attending Mass and the May Crowning with your family is the last but not least part of this beautiful weekend!

Whom Can I Contact in case of any questions?

All paperwork and questions should be directed to Jasmine Kuzner, the parish Director of Religious Education. You can reach her at reled@stbernadetteschurch.org or at 301-593-5611 x333.

The DRE office is adjacent to the chapel and is accessed through the school lobby. Paperwork can be dropped off at the rectory or school offices. It can also be mailed to: Saint Bernadette Church; Attn: Jasmine Kuzner, DRE; 70 University Blvd. East, Silver Spring, MD 20901.