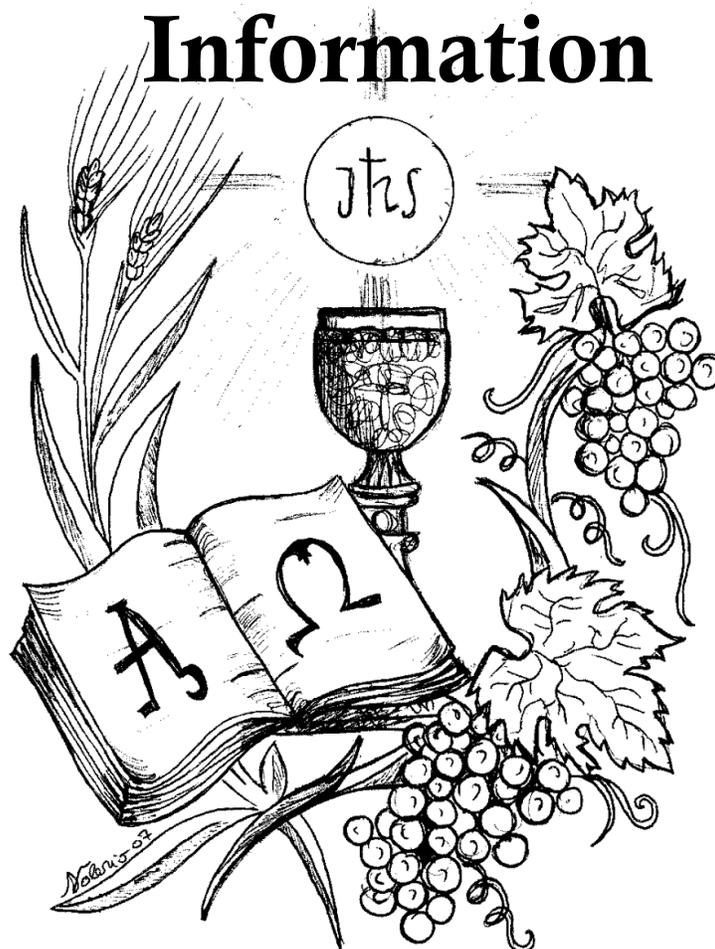


# First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion Information



St. Christopher's Church

1861 Harbor Drive  
Chester, Maryland 21619

Fr. Paul Campell  
Deacon John Robinson  
Deacon Bob Wilson  
Mrs. Katie Sukley

# IMPORTANT DATES 2018

## First Reconciliation & Holy Communion:

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	<b>Deadlines/Date</b>
<b>Baptism Certificates Due</b>	Sunday, October 8 <sup>th</sup> *If your child was NOT Baptized here at St. Christopher's Church
Sign-ups available for First Holy Communion (online or in RE Office)	Now Available (complete form online)- * Signups are on a first come basis, so sign up early if you have a preference! The remaining families not yet signed up by November 12 <sup>th</sup> will automatically be assigned to the open session.
<b>First Reconciliations (all students)</b> (meet in Church)	Thursday, February 22 <sup>nd</sup> at 7PM Students and Families will meet in Church
<b>First Communion Family Retreat</b> (Optional)	Thursday, March 15, 2018 from 6:30-8PM in Hall
Mandatory Rehearsal: First Holy Communion <b>SESSION 1</b> (10AM)	Thursday, May 3, 2018 at 5:30-6:30PM (please sign-in & meet in the hall)
Mandatory Rehearsal: First Holy Communion <b>SESSION 2</b> (1 PM)	Thursday, May 3, 2018 at 7-8PM (please sign-in & meet in the hall)
<b>First Holy Communion SESSION 1</b>	<b>Saturday, May 5, 2018 at 10AM</b> *Students should be in Hall no later than 9:30AM, First Communion Mass will last about 1 hour.
<b>First Holy Communion SESSION 2</b>	<b>Saturday, May 5, 2018 at 1 PM</b> *Students should be in Hall no later than 12:30 PM, First Communion Mass will last about 1 hour.



# First Communion Catechist Contact List

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Phone/E-mail</b>
Fr. Paul Campbell	Pastor	410-643-6220/ <a href="mailto:pastor@stchristopherski.org">pastor@stchristopherski.org</a>
Mrs. Katie Sukley	Director of Religious Education	410-643-8489/ <a href="mailto:ksukley@stchristopherski.org">ksukley@stchristopherski.org</a>
Joni Kilgore	8 AM 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Catechist	<a href="mailto:kentonkilgore@yahoo.com">kentonkilgore@yahoo.com</a>
Erin Burnside	10 AM 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Catechist	<a href="mailto:erinburnside@atlanticbb.net">erinburnside@atlanticbb.net</a>
Bob Healy	6:30PM 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Catechist	<a href="mailto:bobndoris62@yahoo.com">bobndoris62@yahoo.com</a>

## Program Overview & Requirements

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### **Mission**

St. Christopher's Church is committed to ensuring that every child receives a comprehensive religious education and is fully prepared to receive the Sacraments of the Church. Religious Education, just like secular education, is a building process designed to prepare children for life.

It is our goal to educate the mind with true understanding of the faith, to fill the heart with God's peace, love, compassion, and to prompt young Catholics into fruitful action. In this way, they may learn to imitate Christ's Way, know and believe in the Lord's objective Truth, and share in the fullness of a Life as intended by our Heavenly Father.

We will provide catechistic education of authentic Catholic doctrine on matters of faith and morals and help students cultivate a personal relationship with God through prayers, sacraments, and reflection. We will encourage adherence to God's commandments of love and promote awareness and opportunities for serving God through the community and daily good acts.



## Parents as Primary Educators

Our Catholic Faith teaches us that parents are the educators of their children; your participation and support of religious education classes is vital. It is essential that you bring your child to Mass on Sundays, take them to Confession regularly, and pray with them each day.

Make it a priority to pray together with your children! Making prayer apart of your daily routine whether it is before or after meals, in the morning, or at bedtime has a tremendous impact on the development of your child's faith formation. Prayer provides the entire family with tools and comfort they will use for a lifetime.

Discuss with your child what he/she learned in class each Sunday. Follow-up with additional reading and help your children relate what they have learned to their own lives. When possible, try to participate in parish activities. This not only supports the parish but gives children a sense of belonging to our Parish Family. You are the greatest influence in your child's life. They will follow your example.

## Attend Mass & Class Weekly

Both **Reconciliation** and **First Communion** are significant sacraments in our Catholic Faith. The preparation for each of these sacraments requires some additional time at home reviewing the material from your child's class and practicing the prayers weekly. Weekly Mass attendance is **vital** to your child's success and understanding in class as they will be learning about the Mass and the Eucharist. Please keep this mind when planning your child's extra-curricular activities this year.

## Baptismal Certificates

If your child was baptized at a parish outside of St. Christopher's we need a copy of their Baptismal certificate for our records. Students are required to have this on file before receiving First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. If your child has not been baptized, please contact Beth in the Rectory to schedule at 410-643-6220 as soon as possible.

# Communion Day Attire Dress Code

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## Boys –

- Suit - or – Sport Jacket (any color)
- Dress pants (NO Jeans)
- Dress shirt and tie
- Dress socks and dress shoes (NO sneakers)

## Girls–

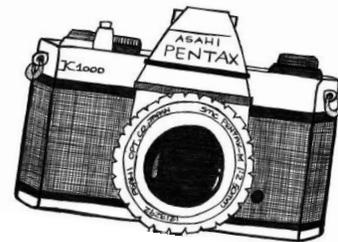
- White dress
- Dress shoes (NO flip-flops)
- Optional: veil, gloves, etc.



## Angel's Closet

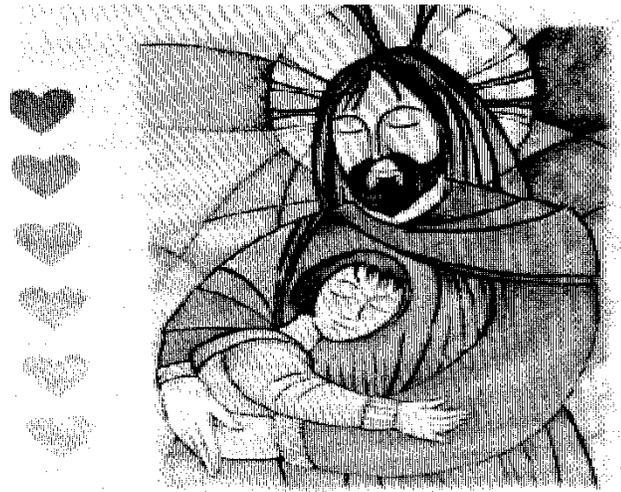
At St. Christopher's we have a limited selection of First Communion dresses, jackets, dress pants, shoes, etc. If you have any difficulty or questions finding a dress, veil, or jacket etc. for your child please stop by the Religious Education Office and take a look. If you have older children that have out grown their First Communion attire and would like to donate it to the Angel's Closet please drop it off anytime to the Religious Education Office. For more information regarding the Angel's Closet see Katie Sukley.

## First Communion Photographer



This year the parish has arranged for a professional photographer on the day of the First Communions. In order to help maintain a reverent and prayerful environment during Mass, we are asking that each family (and all family members) please remain in their pews during Communion time. The photographer will be taking pictures of each child as they receive Holy Communion. We will also be taking a group picture in the Church with Fr. Paul, which will be available for all families.

If you do **not** want your child photographed please indicate so when you sign-up for your preference of First Communion time. Please note that you will be responsible to keep your child out of the class picture if you do not wish to have them in it. If you have any questions about photography for the First Holy Communions, please contact Katie.



## Bless Me Father For I Have Sinned.

### First Reconciliation Information

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The preparation your child receives in class will be most successful, if it is reinforced at home. We strongly encourage you to attend Mass weekly and prepare as a family to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow *together* in our Catholic faith. We appreciate your cooperation and commitment in preparing your child for the sacraments this year.

#### **Practice the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Your Child**

- Explain to your child that Reconciliation is a Sacrament of healing in which our sins are forgiven and in which we are reconciled with God and the Church.
- Teach your child that God is a loving merciful Father who is waiting for us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Explain that Jesus granted the apostles and their successors (priests) the authority to forgive and retain sins.
- Teach your child how to make an examination of conscience and have them make it at the end of the day as part of their night prayers.
- Make sure your child learns the Act of Contrition and that they understand Reconciliation as a way of preparing their soul to receive Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.
- Emphasize that the priest will never tell anyone their sins.

## The Act of Contrition

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. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His Name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

## First Reconciliation at St. Christopher's

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On the day of your Child's First Reconciliation when you arrive at the church, please go to the main Church. On your way into the Church please pick up your child's name card, these will be located on a table in the gathering space- and are to be given to the priest when your child goes to confession. When you gather in the Church please maintain respectful silence throughout the evening and while your children wait their turn.

Encourage your children to pray and reflect on their confession. Once your child has finished, he/she should kneel and say their penance. After all the children have received their First Reconciliation, *we encourage parents to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation as well as this reinforces the importance of the sacrament to the children.* Your example is part of your responsibility as the first teachers of your children in religious education. We ask that any parents who wish to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, please wait until after all the children have gone. After you and your child have completed your penances in your pews you may leave. There will not be a formal dismissal or final song.

The teachers will be going over the Rite of Reconciliation with the students in the classroom. A program will be distributed that lists the steps of reconciliation along with an Act of Contrition. You may take this into confession with you.

"Create  
in me a  
clean heart,  
O God,  
and put a  
new  
and right  
spirit  
within me."  
Psalm 51:10



# Why go to Reconciliation?

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(Taken from the book, “Did Adam & Eve Have Belly Buttons” by Matthew J. Pinto)

**Question #76: “Why do we have to go to Confession? Why can’t we just go to God for forgiveness?”** (Pages 107-108)

**Answer:** God has given us the awesome gift of confession because He wants to reach us through the Church, the community of believers (1Thess 5:12-13). God wants us to be a family (1 TM 3:15), so He gave us spiritual fathers in the priesthood. The priests have the authority to administer His forgiveness to us (CCC 1461). “Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you retain, they are retained.” Jesus told the apostles (Jn 20:23). In short it is a wonderful spiritual treasure, a great gift we should rejoice in.

Actually, we can go “directly” to God, but also through His Church. God sees the two as necessarily linked (LK 10:16; CCC 858). Our sin, even if we suppose it is only “against God,” robs our fellow believers of something- of our being in communion with God and them. Sin diminishes the power of the Church because it cuts us off from full communion together in the Holy Spirit (CCC 953). We become like a dead limb, just barely hanging on, and dead limbs can be harmful to the tree (Rom 11:20-22)

The Church is a body (Eph 5:23 CCC 817). When one member suffers, the whole body suffers. To be reconciled, we must not only repent before God; we must also have reconciliation with the Church. That is the way God wants it (CCC 1469).

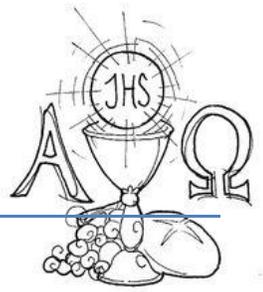
Remember what Jesus said we must do if we are making an offering to God and we recall that someone has a grievance against us? He said we should be reconciled with our brother first, then make our offering to God (Mt 5:21-26). Why is that? Because reconciliation with God and reconciliation with His people are tied together.

Confession also helps us grow in the virtue of humility. Humility is the first step towards true repentance (Mt 23:12). Because pride is the root of all sin, an act of humility such as confessing to a priest, will help push pride out of our lives (Ez 6:49-50). St. Teresa of Avila described humility as “honesty.” If we are humble, we are able to honestly focus on our faults.

A priest can keep us more objective about our sins. He can also give us a concrete “plan of action” to avoid sin in the future. If we go directly to God in the privacy of our own home, we can deceive ourselves. We can be either too harsh or too lenient.

# First Holy Communion Information

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## First Communion Banners

All students and their families in the First Communion Class will need to complete a banner for First Communion this year. These banners will be displayed on your family's pew the day of your child's First Holy Communion. You can be as creative as you'd like for these banners, but they must be religious and display something relevant to the Holy Eucharist. Each banner should also have your child's first and last name- these will be used to mark the pews on the day of your child's First Communion. It is ok to have either the first or last name on the front side of the banner and write the other name on the back- we just need to be able to distinguish who the banners belong to.

Each family will be given the background felt and some variety of felt for the banner along with some sample pictures and additional suggestions/resources for Catholic First Communion Banners. It is your responsibility to make sure your child's banner is completed by the night of the rehearsal. If you finish your child's banner before the night of the rehearsal you can bring it to the Religious Education office and Katie will hold on to it until the day of your Child's First Communion. There will be an opportunity for you to embellish your child's banner with ribbon, beads, etc. if you wish at the First Communion Retreat. If you have any questions about your child's banner please contact Katie.

## Family Retreat – Thursday, March 15, 2018 from 6:30-8:00PM

Again this year we are offering a First Communion Retreat for all students and families. This event is optional but strongly encouraged. There will be various hands on/fun activities for your child and you to participate in all with the emphasis on the Holy Eucharist as we prepare to celebrate this special day with you and your family. More information will be available closer to the retreat. We encourage parents to come with just the First Communicant for this special retreat.



## **Parish Christmas Pageant- Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 2PM**

Every year we invite our First Communicants to participate in the Christmas Pageant. We select the roles of Mary, Joseph, the 3 Kings, Angel Gabriel, and more all from the second grade class! If your child would like to participate in the Christmas Pageant (including being a part of the children's choir) please sign-up online in November!

## **Mandatory First Communion Rehearsal**

There will be a rehearsal prior to your child's First Holy Communion. At least one parent along with the first communicant must attend the rehearsal.

- If you are signed up for **SESSION 1** (10AM) on May, 5<sup>th</sup> your rehearsal time is 5:30-6:30PM on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- If you are signed up for **SESSION 2** (1PM) on May 5<sup>th</sup> your rehearsal time is 7-8PM on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

At the rehearsal we will go over all of the information you will need to know for the day of your child's First Holy Communion. Please remember to bring your completed banners the night of the rehearsal if you have not already done so.

On the night of the rehearsal please come to the Hall first. There will be a sign-in and we will have the students' line up in their assigned order. There is a randomly selected seating arrangement for First Communion that you will receive prior to the rehearsal for the day of First Holy Communion. There is no dress code for rehearsal.

## **First Holy Communion Day Of**

On the day of your child's First Communion each pew will have a name card, and your family will have that entire pew. If you need more than one pew the side aisles and back of the church are available for any additional seating.

