

The Cathedral of St. Mary Of the Immaculate Conception

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November 17, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians of Candidates for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Confirmation:

In the time of pandemic we have adapted a new way of preparing for candidates of the three Sacraments that are normally received during their time in elementary school, a format which we will retain for the foreseeable future. Even though the school classroom teachers will continue to provide teaching of the sacraments as part of the grade two and grade seven religion education curriculum, the preparation here at St. Mary's Cathedral will take place mostly in your individual homes.

For those who do not attend St. Mary's Cathedral or live in the area of the cathedral:

As you know your daughters and sons, the students at École Cathédrale come from all over the city of Kingston and thus, most of you are not parishioners of St. Mary's Cathedral but other parishes in Kingston, meaning you attend or live in parishes throughout the City of Kingston. Parents and guardians are asked to now contact the parish office of the parish which you attend or in which you live to register your child for preparation and celebration of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation and follow the instructions of your pastor in your parish. Each of the parishes will have slightly different requirements. The old format of entire classes receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion has changed here at St. Mary's. Some of the parishes will be retaining the hold system. At some of the parishes and here at St. Mary's your daughter or son will receive the Sacraments when they are ready. The details will be different but the result will be the same – the three best possible gifts – the reception of the Lord's loving mercy in Reconciliation and the reception of the Lord Himself, given to our young sisters and brothers in grade two or older in Holy Communion and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those candidates in grade seven or older receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The following is for those who attend St. Mary's Cathedral Parish on Sundays or live in the parish or who do not attend another parish in Kingston.

For those who attend or live in St. Mary's Cathedral Parish or for those who are not attending anywhere else you are asked to contact Father Shawn for a brief appointment. I will reserve a couple of evenings a week in December and January to be able to schedule appointments. This gives us a time to sit down and briefly go over the program for each of the Sacraments for which your child will be preparing. This will give me a chance to

meet and discuss with each of you, their parents, your daughter's/ son's Sacramental Preparation and your role in it. This is a meeting with you. Please make arrangements so that you can attend without your child/ children. The meeting, as mentioned, will be brief.

All students in grade two or three, and anyone older who is Catholic and has not received their First Holy Communion is encouraged to prepare for the reception of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. If your daughter/son is in grade one and is particularly mature in their Faith and keen to receive these Sacraments they are warmly welcomed and encouraged to do so.

All students in grade seven or eight or older, who have not received their Sacrament of Confirmation are encouraged to prepare to do so. If your son/daughter is in grades 5 or 6 and is particularly mature in their Faith and keen to be Confirmed they are warmly welcomed and encouraged to do so.

After preparation your daughter/son, together with you and myself, will decide if they are ready to receive these very important Sacraments. Only when they fully feel prepared and desire to receive the Sacraments are they encouraged to ask the Church to grant them these Sacraments.

At that point you would contact me by email to arrange a date for the celebration of First Reconciliation, just as you would for Baptism. I would hear their First Confession at a private time in the cathedral, with the rest of you, their family, present. It is also a great opportunity for you to receive the Sacrament as well. After First Confession your daughter/son would complete their preparation for First Holy Communion. You would then contact me and they would receive their First Holy Communion, not as a group or a class, but individually, together with you and the rest of the parish community, at one of our Sunday Celebrations of the Eucharist.

Your first reaction to this letter might be that you may think you are not qualified to accompany your son/daughter in their preparation for these Sacraments. I remind each of you that you are qualified, able, blessed, and called to prepare your child by your love, your faith, your sincerity, and especially by your God-given privilege of having your child entrusted to you.

You will probably have questions or concerns. Hopefully most of these will be answered in our individual meeting but of course you are welcome and invited to contact me so that the parish and I may be of encouragement and assistance. I look forward to hearing from you and meeting with you. I am praying for you and your children as we enter into this new way of Sacramental Preparation at the parish of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

Sincerely Yours,

Father Shawn

Father Shawn J. Hughes, Rector