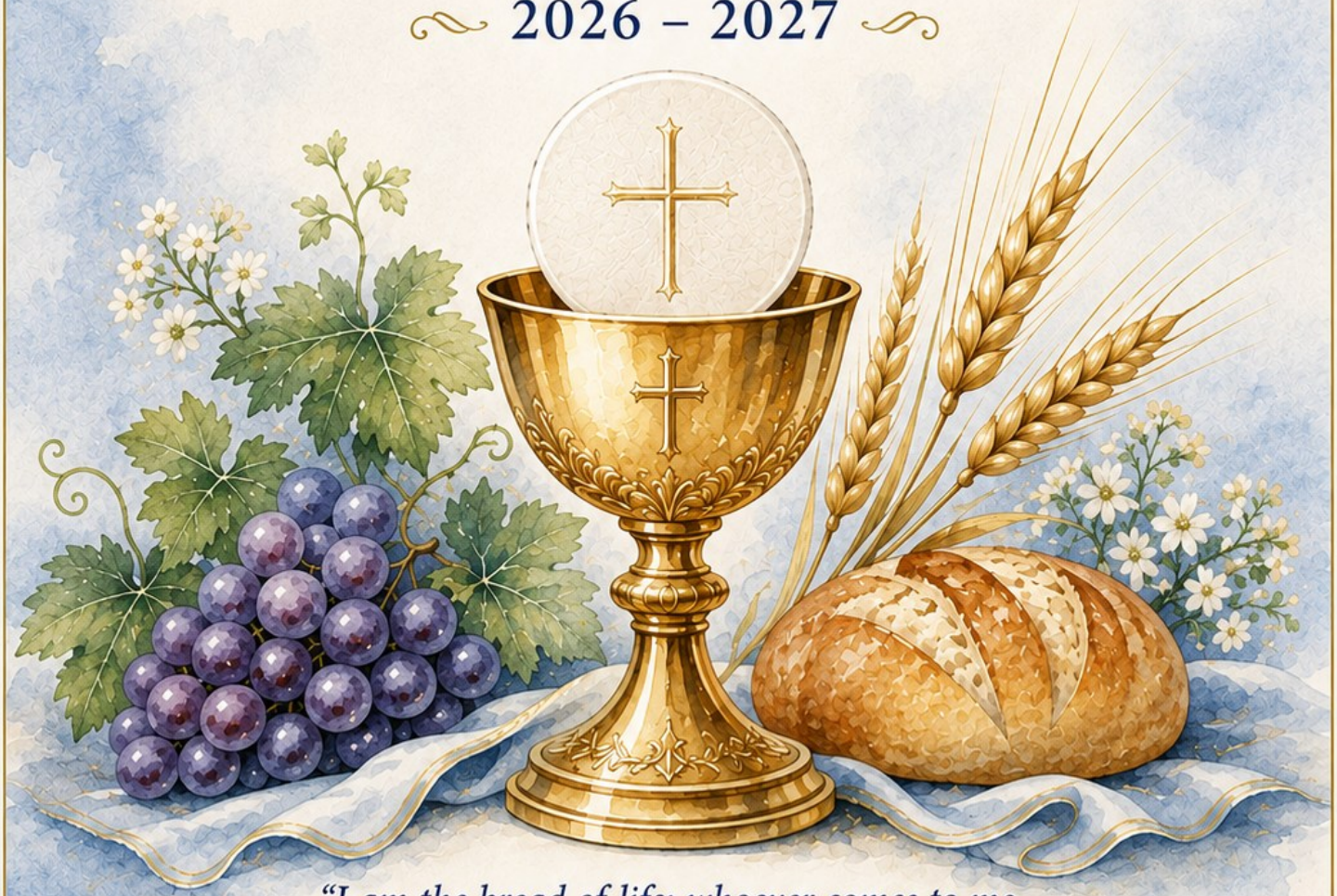
ST. LAWRENCE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

FIRST COMMUNION HANDBOOK

2026 – 2027



"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."
~ John 6:35



ST. LAWRENCE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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DUE DATES

Baptism Certificate—**December 8, 2026**

Permission Letter from Pastor—**December 8, 2026**

Reconciliation Stone—**March 8, 2027**

Spiritual Opportunities Worksheets—**April 21, 2027**

IMPORTANT DATES

FIRST RECONCILIATION

Monday, March 8, 2027
St. Lawrence Church, 6:00-8:00PM

FIRST COMMUNION

Saturday, May 1, 2027
St. Lawrence Church
10:00AM (STL 2A, YFF)
12:30PM (STL 2B, AHN, VILLA)

Dear 2026-2027 First Holy Communicants,

The sacraments are a wonderful expression of God's presence in our lives. Through First Reconciliation and First Communion, you will continue the faith journey that began at your baptism when God chose you as His own.

First Communion Schedule 2026-2027

First Communion Parent Mtg

Sunday, October 25, 2026, 11:15AM-12:15PM (Higgins Hall/St. Gabriel)
Wednesday, October 28, 2026, 6:30-7:30PM (make-up—Higgins Hall/St. Thomas)

SESSION 1: God Sent Jesus to Save Us

Sunday, February 7, 2027, 11:15AM-12:30PM (Celtic Hall-Cafeteria)
Wednesday, February 10, 2027, 3:30-4:45PM (make-up—St. Lawrence School)

SESSION 2: Forgiveness & Healing

Sunday, February 21, 2027, 11:15AM-12:30PM (Higgins Hall/St. Gabriel)
Wednesday, February 24, 2027, 3:30-4:45PM (make-up—St. Lawrence School)

SESSION 3: Preparing for Reconciliation

Sunday, February 28, 2027, 11:15AM-12:30PM (Higgins Hall/St. Gabriel)
Wednesday, March 3, 2027, 3:30-4:45PM (make-up—St. Lawrence School)



FIRST RECONCILIATION

Monday, March 8, 2027, 6:00-8:00PM (Church)
Remember to bring the Reconciliation stone!

SESSION 4: Explaining the Mass with Fr. Chuck

Wednesday, March 10, 2027, 7-8:00PM (Church)

SESSION 5: The Eucharist

Sunday, March 14, 2027, 11:15AM-12:30PM (Higgins Hall/St. Gabriel)
Wednesday, March 17, 2027, 3:30-4:45PM (make-up—St. Lawrence School)

SESSION 6: Preparing for Communion

Sunday, April 18, 2027, 11:15AM-12:30PM
Wednesday, April 21, 2027, 3:30-4:45PM (make-up—St. Lawrence School)



FIRST COMMUNION REHEARSAL

Monday, April 26, 2027—STL 2A, YFF, 6:30-8:30pm (Church)
Wednesday, April 28, 2027—STL 2B, Villa, AHN, 6:30-8:30pm (Church)

FIRST COMMUNION

Saturday, May 1, 2027, 10:00AM (STL 2A, YFF; Church)
Saturday, May 1, 2027, 12:30PM (STL 2B, AHN, Villa; Church)

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The Gift of the Eucharist!

Dear First Holy Communion Parents,

This preparation time for first penance and first Eucharist marks an important step in your child's formation in the Catholic faith. What a wonderful privilege it is for you to talk to your son or daughter about your relationship with Jesus; to teach them how much God loves them and waits for them in the sacrament of penance and how Jesus, the Bread of Life, sustains us for the Christian journey!

Passing on the Church's faith in the love of God and the values taught to us by Jesus Christ, is the most important thing you can do as a parent. As children grow and learn, they make mistakes. It is all part of learning. Teaching your child forgiveness and humbly asking for forgiveness are important lessons in shaping them to become the person that God has created them to be. The sacrament of penance is an encounter with the merciful love of Christ that lets children know that there is nothing that they can ever do that will make God love them less. He waits for them with great love in the confessional to offer His mercy and healing.

Catholics truly believe Jesus' words in John 6:53-55: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink." When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Jesus Himself - Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity - His Real Presence. Jesus, who takes the form of bread and wine, comes to us to nourish us, strengthen us, and unite with us so that we may be one with Him and the Father and the Holy Spirit, and be empowered to live out our mission. The Holy Eucharist truly is the "source and summit of the Christian life." (CCC 1324)

This is the gift your child receives at First Communion. At every Mass, Jesus becomes entirely and absolutely present among us. Jesus Christ is God's total and absolute Love made flesh. As human beings we can't love like this. Yet, in the Eucharist, we receive Christ's Body and Blood so that we can experience this kind of infinite love. This infinite love is manifested in the Eucharist. As we partake of the Eucharist, Christ intimately unites Himself to us, so we may participate in the Trinitarian Love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and share this Love with others.

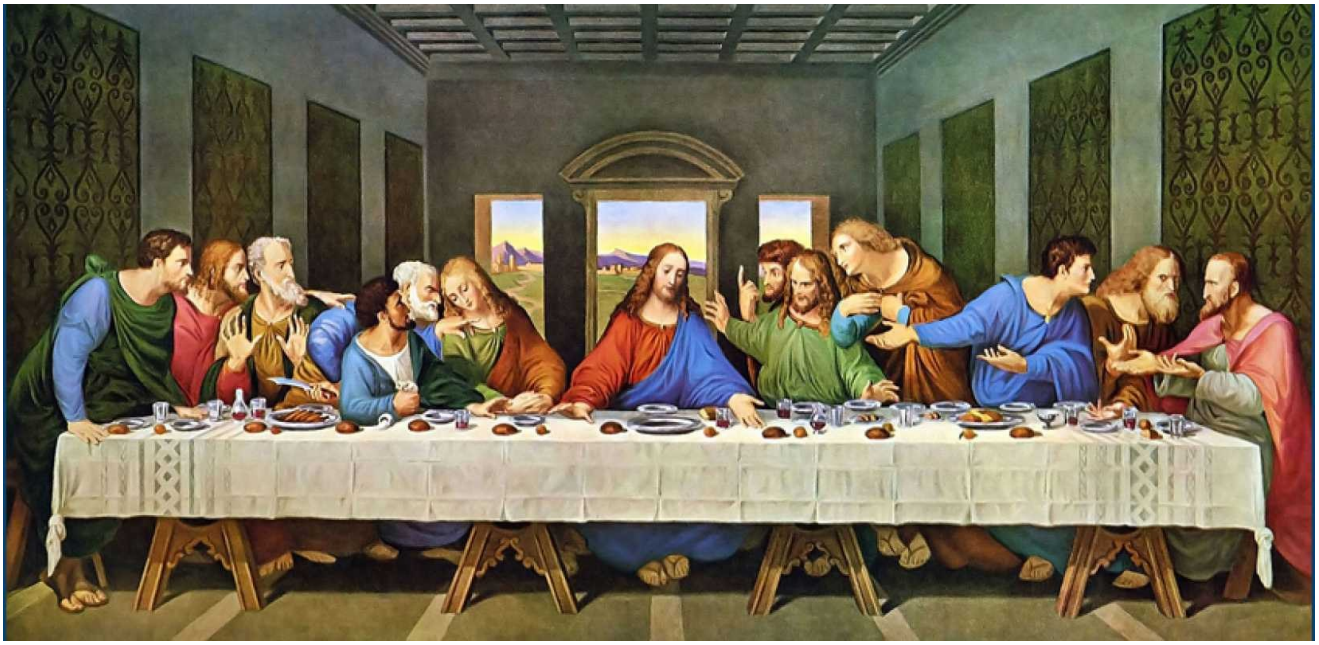
The home is the primary place where faith is cultivated. Parents are their child's primary example of how to live as a Christian and you remain integral to your child's spiritual formation throughout life. By living a fully sacramental life, availing of the sacrament of penance regularly and the Holy Eucharist every Sunday, you model the trust, love and faith you desire for your children in their relationship with God. As you attend to your own personal faith formation and holiness, you model the true meaning of discipleship.

As expressed in the words of every baptismal liturgy, the handing on of the faith is primarily the responsibility of parents, and you are described as the first and best teachers of your children in the ways of faith. You are not alone in this role. We, at St. Lawrence, are ready to guide, support and encourage you as you lead your family to become intentional disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ.



Reconciliation/First Communion Requirements

- ☐ **PRACTICE YOUR FAITH** regularly by participating in the Mass on Sundays and Holy days.
- ☐ **REGISTER FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST COMMUNION** on our website: stlawrence.org/youth-first-holy-communion/.
- ☐ **PROVIDE A COPY OF YOUR CHILD'S (FRONT AND BACK) BAPTISM CERTIFICATE** via email to mmontero@stlawrence.org by December 8, 2026. (No exceptions.) If you don't have a copy of the certificate, request an updated baptism certificate from your child's church of baptism for your future records. **SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Baptism Certificate.**
- ☐ **ATTEND ALL SESSIONS** on the schedule. Attendance is required for all sessions, rehearsal, and the sacrament. The only excused absences are for illness—to the degree that a child is kept home from school—or a family emergency. A child who has excessive absences will need to wait until the following year to celebrate the sacrament. Scheduling conflicts such as sporting events, practices, or other extracurricular activities will NOT be considered an excused absence. Preparation for the sacrament is expected to take precedence over those other types of activities. If you cannot attend a Sunday session, please be sure to attend the Wednesday afternoon makeup session.
- ☐ **BE A GOOD STEWARD.** Stewardship is an integral part of the First Communion journey. Youth should be involved in experiences that enable them to use their gifts and talents in service of others. Complete three spiritual opportunities (pages 6-8).





Baptism Certificate, Attire & a Rock!

Registration and Baptism Certificate

For your child to be registered for First Communion, you must complete the online registration found at:

ENGLISH—stlawrence.org/youth-first-holy-communion/ OR
SPANISH—stlawrence.org/primera-reconciliacion-y-primera-comunion/.

Please email a copy of the baptism certificate to mmontero@stlawrence.org by Sunday, December 8, 2026. (No exceptions.) **SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Baptism Certificate.**

Why is providing a copy of your child's baptismal record so important? All parishes are required to maintain records of the sacraments every Catholic receives at that parish. But the church where the person was baptized is the primary keeper of all of his/her sacramental records. Information about First Communion, Confirmation, marriages and other sacraments received by a Catholic must be sent to the church where the person was baptized. To correctly forward your child's sacramental records, St. Lawrence Parish needs the **EXACT** name of the church, address, and date of your child's baptism.

First Reconciliation and First Communion Attire

First penance is not as formal as First Communion. However, we encourage families to dress their best as though they are attending Mass: an appropriate dress/skirt or khakis/pants with a polo shirt. No shorts, flip flops or tank tops.

For First Communion, the tradition at St. Lawrence is for **GIRLS** to wear a simple white dresses with shoulders and back covered (sleeveless dresses need to be covered with a sweater, cap sleeves are okay), white shoes, white socks or tights, and white veil or wreath. Dresses should be knee length or longer. Heels should not be taller than an inch for the child's safety. **BOYS** should wear a sport or suit jacket (conservative colors), collared shirt with tie and matching slacks, socks and shoes.

**Gloves, rosaries, bibles are permissible; however, a child's hands MUST be empty when approaching the altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament.

Find a Rock to Symbolize Your Sins

Just as we say that Peter's heart grew heavy with his sins, we can also say that his heart was hardened. Some people even say that our hearts can be "stony" when we are unable to love because of the sins we carry around. Have your child find a small rock to remind him/her of their sins and how they want their heart not to be "stony." **Make sure they bring this rock with them at first reconciliation where they will turn in their rock for a symbol of love!**





Spiritual Opportunities

All youth must complete three spiritual opportunities, draw a picture of what you did for each opportunity, and **turn them in to the Faith Formation Office or email to mmontero@stlawrence.org by April 21, 2027**.
SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Spiritual Opportunities.

Stewardship is an integral part of the First Communion & reconciliation journey. The spirituality of stewardship should seek to integrate the truths of our Catholic faith, the sacred Scriptures, and the Mass into our daily actions. Spirituality has real meaning in our lives and the lives of others because we connect to the source of that meaning, Jesus Christ and His Church. Stewardship is a way of living, not merely a program offered through a parish.

Spiritual opportunities ideas:

- ☐ Attend Daily Mass (Monday—Saturday) or go to a church event with family.
- ☐ Pray the rosary with your family and/or friends.
- ☐ Watch BLESSED videos about:
  Reconciliation - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PLZisXcLIZva4ZGET7CPqvgB75PFXZfV07
  First Communion - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZisXcLIZva6wnuJgKnPxNo-GJOHu5wKF
- ☐ Go to https://stlawrence.org/formation/formed/ and find a video to watch with a good friend or family member. There are lots to select from!!!
- ☐ Read a story from the bible with your family and/or friends.
- ☐ Learn some traditional prayers of the Church that you don't already know and pray them.
- ☐ Visit the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesdays (9:00AM-7:00PM) during Adoration in the church.
- ☐ Learn about a saint.

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."
-1 Peter 4:10



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Spiritual Opportunity #1

(Due April 21, 2027) **SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Spiritual Opportunity**

Your Name:_____

(What did you select/do):

_____

DRAW HERE:

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Spiritual Opportunity #2

(Due April 21, 2027) **SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Spiritual Opportunity**

Your Name:_____

(What did you select/do):

_____

DRAW HERE:

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Spiritual Opportunity #3

(Due April 21, 2027) **SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Spiritual Opportunity**

Your Name:_____

(What did you select/do):

_____

DRAW HERE:

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Permission Letter from the Pastor

For families who are not registered parishioners of St. Lawrence Catholic Church

Ideally, children should be prepared for and receive a sacrament at their home parish, although there are instances where a sacrament may be received at a different parish. If your family is a member of another parish but you request that your child participate in the preparation and receive the sacrament of First Holy Communion at St. Lawrence Catholic Church, please ask your pastor to sign the form below. (Your parish can use their own letter as well.)

Please return the signed form to the Faith Formation Office or email to mmontero@stlawrence.org by Wednesday, December 8, 2026. SUBJECT LINE ON THE EMAIL: Child's Name/Permission Ltr.

Name(s) of child(ren): _____

Name of parents: _____

Registered parishioners of: _____

Address of parish: _____

_____

Reason for the request: _____

This certifies that I grant permission for the parents named above to have their child(ren) participate in the preparation and receive the sacrament of First Holy Communion at St. Lawrence Catholic Church, 5225 N. Himes Ave., Tampa, FL.

Date:_____

Pastor's name: _____

Pastor's signature: _____

Church name: _____



Examination of Conscience for Kids

Before you celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation with your children, help them to prepare by coaching them through an examination of conscience. An examination of conscience is a prayerful reflection on our actions in light of our faith in order to identify sins, patterns of sin, or ways that we are falling short of who God is calling us to be. Once we recognize our sins, we can ask God for forgiveness and healing.

Encourage your kids to begin their examination of conscience with a prayer to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment. Here's an example:

Come, Holy Spirit, into my soul. Show me my sins, both the wrong that I did and the good I failed to do. Give me the grace to be sorry for my sins out of love for God, so that through Confession my soul might be healed and strengthened to do good. Amen!

Responsibilities to God:

- ☐ Have I prayed my morning prayers and night prayers?
- ☐ Have I prayed with my parents and family?
- ☐ Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?
- ☐ Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?
- ☐ Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me do what is right?

Responsibilities to Others:

- ☐ Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
- ☐ Have I lied or been deceitful to them or to others?
- ☐ Have I been stubborn or rebellious?
- ☐ Have I talked back to parents, teachers or other adults?
- ☐ Have I pouted and been moody?
- ☐ Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers, and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates?
- ☐ Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?
- ☐ Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
- ☐ Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?
- ☐ Have I used bad language?
- ☐ Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?
- ☐ Have I performed my responsibilities, such as homework and household chores?
- ☐ Have I been helpful and affectionate toward my family?
- ☐ Have I been kind and generous with my friends?



During Reconciliation, we confess our sins to a priest.

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"Lord Jesus, I love and adore you. You're a special friend to me. Welcome, Lord Jesus, oh welcome. Thank you for coming to me. Thank you, Lord Jesus, Oh thank you, for giving yourself to me. Make me strong to show your love, wherever I may be. Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray. Bless all of us children, in your loving care, and guide us to heaven, to live with you there. I'm ready now, Lord Jesus, to show how much I care. I'm ready now to give your love at home and everywhere."

NOTES: