

Raising your children within the Catholic Faith

As parents you are the natural teachers of your children to the faith. The parish and the school help you to fulfill this task, but it is important for you to be involved in the faith life of your child. Celebrating the sacraments is a powerful way for your child to make a life-long commitment to God. Sacraments provide the grace of God to assist and nourish your child through his/her Christian life. When your child receives a sacrament, he/she is participating in the life of God and is growing in the life of Christ.

If you are a Catholic family, the following information is from the parishes and is intended to make the topic of “Sacraments” clearer and to help guide you on how best to help your child.

If you are a non-Catholic family and would like your child to receive the sacraments, the following information will help; however if you require further information, please contact the parish for more details. Remember that the school and the parish WILL support you with this and we welcome you.



The Sacraments

A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace. We receive grace each time we receive a sacrament which draws us closer to God. As Christians we do our best to love and serve as Jesus would. It's not always easy. God has given us the sacraments as pure gift to help us through the Holy Spirit to encourage us and give us strength in times of struggle and doubt. Most of all when we partake in the sacraments God reveals his love for us. An unconditional love which never ends no matter what good or bad choices we make in this life.



The Catholic Church celebrates Seven Sacraments - Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Marriage. The three that are usually celebrated for school children are First Communion (Eucharist), Reconciliation and Confirmation:



Eucharist

This is the mysterious centre and pillar of all sacraments. The Eucharist through the appearance of bread and wine is transformed into the true presence of Christ himself, his body and blood. This liturgy is a celebration of Christ's sacrifice of himself for us. As we say "Amen" and receive communion we unite ourselves to Christ and our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. It is a feast of thanksgiving.

Reconciliation

This is the sacrament of healing which calls us to conversion. Through the sacrament Christ reaches out in forgiveness, love and mercy. We are healed from the burden of personal sin and reconciled with God, the Church and our community.

Confirmation

Usually as babies children at the request of their parents are baptized and welcomed as members of the Body of Christ. As confirmation candidates, these children, in the eyes of the church are ready to choose for themselves to say “Yes” to God. They are imprinted with a permanent seal that by the Bishop that marks them as disciples of Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit strengthens him/her, putting in motion the grace they received at baptism into practice through their life inspiring them to become a witness for Christ.

Baptism

This is the foundational sacrament and the prerequisite for all other sacraments. It unites us with Jesus Christ as we share in his death and resurrection. Baptism cleanses us from all sin, but more importantly it relieves the burden of original sin. Through it we become members of the church and enter into a covenant with God. **If your child has not been baptized, please contact the parish and the church will support you in receiving this foundational sacrament.**

Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Marriage

These sacraments are usually celebrated when we are older. Anointing of the sick is a sacrament of healing, consoling, and giving hope to those who are ill. The sacrament of Holy Orders is an ordaining of service to the community as a priest or deacon. The sacrament of marriage is the celebration of the bonding of man and woman in covenant love. Although these sacraments will most likely not be celebrated while students are of school age, they will study them in their religious education classes.

Registering for a Sacrament

Although schools teach the sacraments in religion classes, they don't provide formal sacramental preparation class. Because education begins at home, preparing for a sacrament has changed from an academic environment to a family/home environment which relies on the involvement of the parent. In order to receive the sacraments children must register at their local parish and then attend sessions throughout the year. To register for First Communion and Reconciliation, students must be in grade 2 or older. To register for Confirmation, students must be in grade 6 or older. Classes begin at the end of September and continue to the end of May.

Please note that registration dates and times for First Communion (Eucharist), Reconciliation and Confirmation for both Holy Family Parish and St. Patrick's Parish will be in June and late August bulletins and posted on their websites. In addition, announcements are made in the school newsletters. If you would like any further information regarding scheduling, resources or guidance please contact the Sacramental Preparation Coordinator, Sally Myers at 403-527-6933 or email sallym@holyfamilymh.ca. If you have any questions regarding religious education, feel free to contact the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education Religious Education Coordinator, Jill Wilkinson at 403-502-8353 or email jill.wilkinson@mhcbe.ab.ca.

