

January 22, 2008

Dear Parents:

In a few months, we will be celebrating First Communion. This event is one of happiness, not only for your child and for you as parents, but also for our whole parish community, which the Eucharist unites in the bond of Jesus' self-giving love.

### ***First Communion Date***

First Communion will be celebrated at 1 PM on Sunday, April 27.

### ***Parents' Class***

The fundamental influence of parents in the total Christian formation of their children is recognized by the bishops of the world and by religious educators. Therefore, there will be a **class for parents on Sunday, February 24, from 1-3 PM in the school library**. All parents are invited; however, **those parents whose first child is receiving the sacrament are required to attend**.

### ***Practice***

Practice for First Communion will not be necessary for parents. **The children's practice is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM.**

### ***Public School Children***

Arrangements are to be made by the parents of children, who attend the public schools, to have the children **in the gym at St. Mary's by 8:25 AM. Dismissal will be at**

**2:30 P.M.** The principals of the various schools will be notified about this practice. A **permission slip from you to your child's school is necessary by April 23 to give your child an excused absence** for the day of April 24.

Check with your child's school to determine how school bus transportation to St. Mary's School is made possible in your area. **If you want your child to ride a school bus to and from St. Mary's School, you must make arrangements by phone and by letter to your child's school by April 23.** If you will be transporting your child yourself, please park in the Jennings Road parking lot. Your child will need to use the School entrance facing the parking lot to enter the building. At the end of the day, you may either, park in the Jennings Road parking lot and enter through the School entrance to pick up your child from the gym or you can drive up at the bell tower. Please let us know in writing if your child will be "walk-in" or "drive-up." I am not able to arrange bus transportation myself, so please allow yourself time to make these arrangements.

Your child may pack a lunch or order a hot lunch through the cafeteria. The cost of the hot lunch is \$2.00. Closer to the date of the practice, I will give you the menu for the day. **There is no plan in place to provide lunch for children, who do not have money or have not packed. Since St. Mary's School cafeteria operates under the supervision of the state, charges are not allowed, and the cafeteria cannot accept the free or reduced lunch arrangements provided to some children. That program is arranged for your child through your child's own school. Be assured, however, that no child will go hungry if a lunch is truly forgotten.**

### *First Communion Attire*

First Communion catalogs will be sent home with your child in the next couple of weeks. These catalogs feature veils, prayer books, rosaries, and many other gift and party items. If you wish to place catalog orders, may I suggest that you do so early. Be sure to stop by Laudick's Jewelry and Derry Drugs. They carry lovely gifts. The Bridge also has some traditional First Communion gift items.

Here is a clothing guide:

Girls: It has been customary, here at St. Mary's, for girls to wear white dresses and veils. Veils are not mandatory. Some girls have chosen to wear flowers or simple bows. The dress should be modest with no sundress or spaghetti straps unless an appropriate bolero or jacket is worn over the shoulders. The dress should not be too short. Simple jewelry may be worn. Gloves can be worn for photos only. They are not to be worn during Mass. Tights, knee socks, or anklets and any color dress shoes are fine. Prayer books, rosaries, or other items will not be carried by the children in procession.

Boys: Boys usually wear a neat suit of any color, or dress slacks and blazer, white shirt, and tie. Some people prefer bow ties, and these are fine also. If your son does not own a blazer, a

nice dress shirt and tie is certainly all right. Prayer books, rosaries, or other items will not be carried by the children in procession.

Once in a while, a family tells me that they have a used suit or dress to sell or to donate. If you have a need, please call me. Perhaps such an item will be available.

### ***Banners***

As part of the preparation for First Communion, you are invited as a family to make a Eucharistic banner, which will be hung in church for the First Communion Mass. The banner should be a reflection of this beautiful sacrament. The material may be felt, burlap, satin, or any other suitable fabric; and it may be embellished as you desire. **Please, keep the banner to the dimensions** as described on the diagram, which has been enclosed with this letter. The banner will be placed in a constructed display. The Velcro will be used to enclose the top. Please **do not put the banner on a rod or otherwise sew the top closed**. **The Velcro should be stitched through** rather than simply glued on. Too often the glue is not sufficient and we discover that the banner must be pinned—sometimes at the last minute. Last year there were two banners, which had fallen into the aisle mere minutes before Mass. Please **attach your child's name** to the back of the banner to help us return a banner to any child who might forget to take it home after Mass. Your child's name should be added in a way that does not show through to the front. Be especially careful in the use of markers.

The banner should be brought to School or to SOR no later than April 23. We would like to have the banners in place for the practice. You may take the banner home with you after Mass so that it can be a part of your home celebration.

### ***Seating for First Communion***

The First Holy Communion class will enter the church alone as a group with reserved seating for them in the front pews on each side of the center aisle.

There will be no reserved seating for parents. Parents may sit in any section in the church on a first come, first served basis. This will enable you to be with other members of your family or to take photos from different vantage points. Only those who videotape the Mass should sit in the choir loft.

## *Photography and Videography*

A group photo will be taken immediately after the First Communion Mass. Individual photos will also be taken, if indicated on the order form and envelope, which will be sent home with your child on the day of the practice. On the order form, please list the following: St. Mary's First Communion, Child's Name, Parent's Name, and telephone number. These envelopes should be turned in just before the First Communion Mass. Photos will be mailed to your home.

You will have the opportunity to take photos on your own, so we ask that you please be respectful of our photographer and allow him or her to set up the group so that the best photo can be taken and to allow the photographer to get the first shots.

You may take photos during Mass; however, please do not stand in the aisle during processions or at any place on the altar platform or steps, nor in the immediate area around the steps. Come no closer than the first pew in the row. A couple of instances in previous years have brought up the question as to whether or not individuals should be allowed to take photographs during Mass at all. Some parishes have adopted the policy of no photographs during Mass. I would like to see the opportunity to take photographs continue, but the courtesy and respect of everyone will determine what happens in the future.

We will not have a professional videographer. You are welcome to videotape the Mass, but video cameras on stands must be set up in the choir loft. Only the persons actually videotaping should be in the choir loft. Other family members should sit in the main body of the church. This will also help reduce unnecessary noise that can spoil the taping. Anyone who sets up video equipment in the aisles will be asked to remove his or her equipment.

Please keep this letter handy and mark your calendars with these important dates and times. And please share the information about photography and videography with family and friends, who will be attending. If you should misplace this letter or banner diagram, copies can be found on our parish website at [www.stmarysvanwert.com](http://www.stmarysvanwert.com).

Yours in Christ,  
Cheryl L. Freewalt  
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