

**Divine Mercy Catholic Parish  
Paulding County, Ohio**

**POLICIES FOR HOMEBASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**BACKGROUND**

A time-honored tradition within the Catholic Church is the “handing on” of the faith in the home by the example and instruction of parents to their children. Catholic schools and parish schools of religion came into existence to assist families in their responsibility for the education of their children. Some parents, however, choose neither Catholic schools nor parish schools of religion, and thus provide religious instruction and sacramental preparation at home.

Through the years, the Church has always called parents to be the “primary educators” of their children. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children: “They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and . . . service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues.” (CCC 2223).

“In accord with the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the pastor is to make particular provision:

1. that suitable catechesis is given for the celebration of the sacraments;
2. that children are properly prepared for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and Most Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of Confirmation by means of a catechetical formation given over an appropriate period of time;
3. that children are more fruitfully and deeply instructed through catechetical formation after the reception of First Communion;
4. that catechetical formation also be given to those handicapped in body or mind insofar as their condition permits;
5. that the faith of young people and adults be fortified, enlightened and developed through various means and endeavors.” (Canon 777).

Therefore, all engaged in the catechetical ministry are obligated to fulfill their duties in cooperation with the bishop and pastor in this single commission to educate in Christ’s name(Canon 774, 776).

**GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS**

1. Parents are responsible to register their household with the parish. They should make known their intention to catechize their own children to the pastor or catechetical leader by a phone call or letter and should state which resources they will use in the religious education of their children.
2. Parents and children are encouraged to participate in parish liturgies and/or other events prepared specifically for children and their families.
3. Parents are responsible to present their children for the reception of the sacraments and to be in dialogue with the pastor/catechetical leader to ensure that the children are properly prepared. Since the sacraments are community celebrations and not private events of piety, and Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are Sacraments of Initiation into the community, parents should be made aware that preparation includes parish community involvement.

**FIRST RECONCILIATION**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is typically celebrated for the first time in second grade, at age 7 or 8. Although there is no exact age required by the church, the *Code of Canon Law* assumes that children preparing for First Reconciliation and First Communion have reached the “age of reason.”

Parents should attend the First Reconciliation Parent Meeting in the fall or make arrangements with the catechetical leader to go over this information. Students will need to memorize the Hail Mary, the Our Father, and the Act of Contrition (any version of the prayer is acceptable). Our parish celebration of First Reconciliation occurs each year in January, but parents can make other arrangements with the pastor if they are not able to celebrate the sacrament at this time.

## FIRST COMMUNION

First Communion is celebrated as a parish on a chosen weekend during the Easter Season. Families can attend whichever Mass is most convenient for them. A First Communion retreat occurs on the Saturday morning of First Communion Weekend and is required for all First Communion students and at least one parent.

Parents should also fill out and return the attached First Communion Information Form by October of the school year their child will be celebrating the sacrament.

In order that the pastor be made aware of a child's preparedness for the sacrament, parents who are preparing their First Communion students at home are **required to write a letter addressed to the pastor describing what has been done for the year to prepare for the sacrament.** This letter should be received no later than one month in advance of First Communion. Information that should be included in the letter includes:

1. What books or materials were used in the preparations?
2. Please give specific examples of what your child understands regarding the Eucharist?
3. What was the timeframe and frequency of your child's preparation?
4. Did you participate in a homeschooling group that has studied together for this sacrament? If so, please give some information on the group, how often they met, what sort of information was covered.
5. What was the date of your child's First Reconciliation?
6. Which weekend Mass would you like to attend for First Communion?

## CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated at Divine Mercy parish every other year (currently in the spring of the even-numbered years) in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Older children are also eligible to celebrate this sacrament if they have not done so before. Students are required to complete the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in preparation for Confirmation.

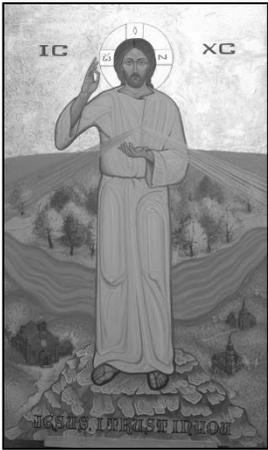
Parents should attend the Confirmation Parent Meeting in the fall or make arrangements with the catechetical leader to go over this information. Parents should also fill out and return the attached Confirmation Information Form by October of the school year their child will be celebrating the sacrament. The Sponsor Eligibility form (and any additional paperwork given during the parent meeting) is due a month prior to the sacrament.

A Confirmation Retreat will take place on the Saturday morning the week of Confirmation. Confirmation candidates and their sponsors are required to attend the retreat. If a sponsor cannot attend, a parent may come in their place.

In order that the pastor be made aware of a student's preparedness for the sacrament, **students** who are preparing for Confirmation at home are **required to write a letter addressed to the pastor describing what has been done for the year to prepare for the sacrament.** This letter should be received no later than one month in advance of Confirmation. The following should be included in the letter:

1. An explicit request to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
2. What have you done throughout the year to prepare for this sacrament?
3. What are the main themes that you studied?
4. What do you understand about the sacrament?
5. What textbook have you used?
6. Have you been part of a homeschooling group that studied together?
7. What kind of service did you complete?
8. What Saint's name have you chosen for Confirmation and why?





# DIVINE MERCY CATHOLIC PARISH

## CONFIRMATION INFORMATION FORM

The following information is needed for our permanent record books and to update contact information. Please fill out the form completely.

Student's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address P.O. Box  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please include only if you wish to be contacted this way

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please include an email address only if you wish to receive updates this way

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
City State

Date of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Church City State

Father's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maiden Name

Does the student have any allergies or special needs? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

