



# OXYGEN

Preparation to receive First Reconciliation & Eucharist

## **Important Dates:**

### **First Reconciliation Retreats:**

**October 12, 2024**

**February 1, 2025**

**9:30 - 1 pm @ St. John**

### **First Confessions:**

**October 26, 2024**

**February 22, 2025**

**10:30 - 11:30 am. This block is the drop in window for Confessions**

### **First Holy Communion Retreats:**

**November 2, 2024**

**April 5, 2025**

**9:30 - 1 pm @ St. John**

### **First Holy Communion Mass:**

**November 17, 2024 (9, 11am)**

**May 4th, 2025 (9, 11 & 1pm)**

**NOTE: 1 PM mass is in Spanish**

## **CONTACT:**

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## **Why is your process called “Oxygen”?**

An average person takes between 12 and 20 breaths per minute. In a similar way, the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are meant to be experienced frequently, as they are repeatable sacraments. Just as we need oxygen to sustain our bodies, these sacraments provide the spiritual oxygen our souls need. Without enough oxygen, our bodies suffer; similarly, without the grace of Reconciliation and Eucharist, our souls can face spiritual struggles. We hope that through this process, you will come to see Sunday Mass as a breath of fresh air, renewing you as you step into each week.

## **What to Expect**

Our sacramental preparation follows a retreat-based model. You and your child will attend two interactive retreats—one before each sacrament. These retreats offer age-specific content and shared activities designed to deepen your understanding of these sacred moments while fostering a stronger connection with our St. John’s community.

At St. John’s, we believe that you, as the parent or guardian, are your child’s primary educator in the faith. Our goal is to make you the hero of this journey by creating memorable, engaging experiences that empower you as your child’s primary catechist. If you ever need additional support—whether it’s resources, prayers, or encouragement—we’re here to help!

## **What is Included?**

### Before your retreat

While our retreats are very helpful, the retreats are not designed as a stand alone experience. They depend on your involvement at home. Before each retreat we encourage you to:

- Complete the Spiritual Growth Tool
- Make a few intentional choices for your child’s spiritual growth
- Log your successes and setbacks.

### During your Retreat

You will:

- hear from a few guest speakers
- go to Adoration
- create a craft together.
- Children will play games and create hands-on projects to reflect the sacraments.
- Best of all, lunch will be provided. Please let us know if you have dietary restrictions and we will do our best to accommodate you.
- Take home activities

## What is Readiness & Why is it Important:

Catholics understand the importance of the sacraments, but it can sometimes be unclear why they are received at specific times. This can make sacraments feel more like milestones on an assembly line—something to be done simply because it's time. As a result, parents may feel uneasy if their child isn't ready at the expected time or feels prepared before their designated moment, which can lead to feelings of shame or anxiety.

At St. John's, we focus on an individual's readiness to receive a sacrament rather than tying it to a particular school grade. Readiness means someone is fully prepared to embrace a sacrament, and we define it by three key aspects: **Engagement**, **Understanding**, and **Desire**. We believe readiness is best recognized through visible signs of spiritual growth in your child.

Spiritual growth can be challenging to measure because it's often reflected more in internal attitudes than external habits. To help you better recognize and nurture this growth, we've developed two tools:

- **The Spiritual Growth Tool:** Designed like a personality quiz, this tool provides a baseline for your child's spiritual journey, highlights areas for growth, and offers practical suggestions for fostering that growth. It's a personal tool for your reflection throughout the preparation process, and you will have the opportunity to complete it three times along the way.
- **The Spiritual Habit Tracker:** This tool acts as a spiritual planner to guide intentional steps in your child's spiritual development before each retreat. It has two stages: Planning and Reflection. In the Planning stage, you'll set goals based on the results of the Spiritual Growth Tool. In the Reflection stage, you'll review the actions you've taken over time, noting successes and setbacks. You'll submit this tracker at the beginning of each retreat—not for a “grade,” but as a way to stay accountable and mindful of your child's spiritual journey.

## How to Prepare for the Sacraments:

- **Attend Mass**
- **Attend the retreats.**
- **Find time during the week to connect as a family (meals, conversations, game, or movie night)**
- **Lead by example (parents and siblings try to make confession regularly)**
- **Find ways to be thankful!**
- **Pray together. You can try out different devotionals like the rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, novenas, or litanies.**
- **Practice asking for and granting forgiveness. Parents, model for your children how to apologize when you lose your temper, forget something, or hurt your spouse's or your child's feelings. Ask them to forgive you. Help them apologize when they are disrespectful, disobedient, or say something mean. Grant them your forgiveness.**

Check out [www.enkindlecatholic.org](http://www.enkindlecatholic.org) for free prayer resources for families.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### *How does registration work?*

Registration is now open! Please <https://sjwest.org/the-holy-eucharist/> to register!

### *I am struggling to pay. Do you offer scholarships?*

Yes! Please reach out to Adam Garheart at [adam.garheart@sjwest.org](mailto:adam.garheart@sjwest.org) for an application

### *Do I need to turn in my baptismal certificate even if I was baptized at St. John?*

Yes. It simplifies the process if everyone can turn in a copy of their baptismal certificate because we do not have a digital way of accessing certificates. If you cannot find your certificate or need help acquiring one from your church of baptism, please contact us at [faithformation@sjwest.org](mailto:faithformation@sjwest.org) or 410-848-8443.

### *How do the Fall and the Spring dates work for receiving Communion?*

It's really simple: **Blue** and **Yellow** are the colors that make **Green**. To receive Communion, you need to make **Green**!

First Reconciliation:

- Retreat- Saturday October 12, 2024 9:30am-1pm (fall) OR Saturday February 1, 2025 9:30am-1pm (spring)
- Sacrament - Saturday, October 26th 10:30 - 11:30 am (fall) OR Saturday, February 22nd, 2025 10:30-11:30 am (spring)

First Holy Communion:

- Retreat- November 2, 2024 9:30am-1pm (fall)
- Retreat- April 5, 2024 9:30am-1pm (spring)

First Holy Communion Masses:

- November 17th at 9 am or 11 am
- May 4th at 9 am, 11 am or 1 pm (this Mass is entirely in spanish)

So this gives you four options to receive Communion:

- Attend both retreats in the fall: receive on **November 17th**
- Attend both retreats in the spring: receive on **May 4th**
- Attend the reconciliation retreat in the fall, attend the communion retreat in the spring: Receive **May 4th**
- Attend your reconciliation retreat sometime in either Fall or Spring and plan on attending your communion Retreat in Fall 2025 or Spring 2026

### *Can I drop my child off at the retreat?*

No, this is designed for a fun way to interact with your child all while learning about the sacraments.

### ***What if I can't make it to one of the retreats?***

No problem! That's why we hold this 2 times a year. If something comes up and you cannot complete both retreats in this cycle, your progress carries over to our next cycle of retreats.

### ***I'm not a parishioner of St John's, can I still sign up?***

All participants must be registered with St John's Catholic Church in Westminster. If you are not from our parish, you will need a letter from your pastor saying that you have his permission to participate in our sacramental formation.

### ***How do I know if my child is ready?***

The parents/guardians are usually the best at knowing this. If you need guidance, please reach out to one of us on the Faith Formation Team. We have designed a series of tools to help you know this.

### ***What if my child feels nervous when receiving the sacrament?***

Feeling nervous about something new is normal. Help your child by practicing what to expect at home. Pray with your child and share about a time you felt nervous and how you got through it.

### ***Will food be provided for the retreats?***

Yes, we love feeding people! Please let us know, we are happy to accommodate your dietary needs.

### ***What to wear for First Holy Communion?***

- Traditionally, girls wear a white or ivory dress and veil (in similar style to a flower girl dress). *If your child will be receiving the Blessed Sacrament in her hands, gloves are not allowed during the reception of Holy Communion.*
- Boys are encouraged to wear a suit and tie. Suits can be white, navy, black, grey, or tan.
- We have some Outfits available in the Portico Sacrament Shop, which is located in the old Bookstore. Clothing is first come, first serve and entirely donation-based. All is free.

### ***Can we hang a banner on the pew?***

No. This will be a regular Mass, we don't have the space to provide for the banners. You are welcome to make a banner at home. If you need additional resources or materials, please let us know and we are happy to provide those for you.

### ***What if I cannot make the designated Confession or First Communion Time?***

No problem! Please contact our faith formation team at [faithformation@sjwest.org](mailto:faithformation@sjwest.org) and we will help you find an alternate.