

2025-2026

**St. Michael Poplar Springs
Sacrament Handbook
For Children and Youth**



St. Michael Catholic Church

1125 St. Michaels Road

Mt. Airy, MD 21771

410-489-7667

www.stmichaelspoplarsprings.org

GENERAL INFORMATION & POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is expected at all sacramental preparation sessions and retreats.

****Please be aware that in accordance with Archdiocesan policy revised in 2022, a child no longer requires a minimum or one full year of faith formation sessions (or enrollment in Catholic school faith formation) prior to the year in which they prepare for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. It is however, strongly encouraged that your child attend the available faith formation opportunities as reinforcement of their catechesis instilled at home.**

Cancellations

St. Michael follows the Howard County Public Schools inclement weather school closing policy on schooldays. If weekend activities and sessions are canceled because of inclement weather, a notice will be posted on the parish website. No decision will be made until 3:00pm unless Howard County has closed their schools early. We will post any changes to schedules for faith formation classes, parent meetings and retreats on the website.

SACRAMENTS

Baptism

Baptism is the first sacrament one receives when entering the Catholic Faith. "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*),⁴ and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." (CCC 1213)

If you would like to have your child baptized, please complete the form found at <https://www.smpschurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Baptism-Registration-Form-1.pdf> and return to the Parish Secretary at samatucci@smpschurch.org.

If you have a school-aged child who has not been baptized, please contact Deacon Cliff at dcncliffb@gmail.com to begin the process.

First Reconciliation (Penance/Confession)

First Reconciliation, which is received in the fall, is a requirement for receiving First Eucharist. It occurs as early as age 7 (second grade), the age canonically recognized as the age of reason. Children must be baptized, and attending mass on Sunday (or Saturday night). Children should also be enrolled in Faith Formation classes. Sacramental preparation books are sent home for you to read through with your child. Sacramental preparation occurs at home with the support of these classes and Mass attendance.

We use Dynamic Catholic's "Blessed" series, which includes free videos for you to enjoy at home by visiting <https://www.smpschurch.org/sacraments/reconciliation/>.

The sacrament of Reconciliation prepares us for the reception of First Eucharist. Parents attend a parent meeting in the fall and receive materials to prepare their child at home. This preparation is crucial along with regular faith formation sessions. Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist by necessity involved formation for the family. The sacrament preparation is free standing for the purpose of allowing parents the option of waiting until they believe their child is mature enough to handle the meaning and significance of these grace-filled sacraments. Once they have received this sacrament, they then prepare to receive their first Holy Eucharist (Communion). Please submit a copy of your child's baptismal certificate if not baptized at St. Michael.

Father Paul will host a **Parent Meeting on both October 29th and November 1st from 6pm to 7:00pm (please attend one of these sessions)**. This meeting will be an introduction to the Sacramental Preparation for Reconciliation and provide information and valuable resources for the family to support their child prior to receiving the sacrament. A **Parent/Child Meeting will take place on December 13th from 6:00pm to 7:00pm**. Father Paul will share lessons with the children on making good choices and forming a conscience, followed by what to expect in their sacrament preparation. On **January 10th, there will be a retreat led by catechists from 9:00am-12:00pm at the parish**. Children will be able to pray, visit stations where they will learn about the Reconciliation process, visit the Reconciliation room, and discuss and reflect on their preparation prior to receiving the sacrament. A Sign Up Genius will be available to sign up for individual reconciliation times with Father Paul.

First Holy Eucharist

“At the heart of the Eucharist celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ’s Body and Blood” (CCC 1333). This is a mystery surpassing understanding, but we can prayerfully enter more deeply into the mystery.

It is our hope that preparing your child for this sacrament will lead you to greater prayer and understanding too!

Following the reception of First Reconciliation, parents prepare their children to receive First Eucharist (Communion) in the spring. Children must be baptized, and attending mass on Sunday (or Saturday night). Children should also be enrolled in Faith Formation classes. Sacramental preparation books are sent home for you to read through with your child. Sacramental preparation occurs at home with the support of these classes and Mass attendance.

We use Dynamic Catholic’s “Blessed” series, which includes free videos for you to enjoy at home by visiting <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/program-view/>.

This sacrament cannot be celebrated without the sacrament of Reconciliation being completed first. First Communions are held in April (after Easter) during Mass. Father Paul will host a **Parent Meeting on both February 4th and February 7th from 6:00pm to 7:00pm (please attend one of these sessions)**. This meeting will be an introduction to the Sacramental Preparation of First Eucharist and provide information and valuable resources for the family to support their child prior to receiving the sacrament. A **Parent/Child Meeting will take place on March 21st from 6:00pm-7:00pm** for discussion about the Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist followed by making a pew banner. On **April 18th, there will be a retreat led by catechists from 9:00am-12:00pm at the parish**. Children will have the opportunity to pray, discuss and reflect on their sacramental preparation. A Sign Up Genius will be available to sign up for preferred Mass dates to celebrate your child’s First Communion.

****For those receiving First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, books have been purchased as a gift from the parish endowment fund for education.**

Confirmation Preparation - Update

In keeping with his ongoing desire to better support families in the journey of faith, Archbishop Lori has announced his decision to change the standard age of Confirmation in our Archdiocese. Over the course of the next several years, all parishes in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will undergo a process of transition, shifting from the typical time of Confirmation down to the age of 9 years (roughly 4th grade).

Our parish/pastorate is not scheduled to begin the phase-in process until the fall of 2026, and it could take several years to complete the change. We will be in communication about when and how this change will unfold in our community. For more information about the upcoming change in Confirmation age, please see the following link.

<https://www.archbalt.org/faith-formation/im-a-parishioner/>

Preliminary Schedule

Fall 2025: Rising 10th graders who have completed 1 year of preparation in our program will continue to prepare this fall, attend an overnight retreat and celebrate their Confirmation. **We will not be accepting new 10th graders for this year's Confirmation preparation. A mass date has not yet been assigned by the Archdiocese.**

2026/2027 Sacramental Year: 4th Grade and High Schoolers

2027/2028 Sacramental Year: 4th Grade and Middle Schoolers/High Schoolers