

What you need to know about Sacraments at St. Mary Magdalene

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Most people who call our parish office on any given day call to inquire about CCE or sacraments, usually marriage preparation, baptism for children, first Communion, and becoming Catholic. Misinformation about sacraments in the Church abounds. We want you to be informed about how our pastoral staff handles daily inquiries about sacraments, and what you should expect when you call.

In terms of procedures, we don't make this stuff up as we go along. The Catholic Church has well-formulated documents that govern the way in which we carry out the ministry of the Universal Church and our local Church, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. We derive our instructions on how to prepare people for sacraments and how to administer them from several approved sources, and we are duty-bound to follow them. That is one of the things that identifies us as *Catholic*—in every Catholic parish throughout the world there should be the same format for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments, the way in which the Church carries out its sacred liturgy. No one, not even the local priest, has the right to change these formal, solemn, ceremonial acts, called the Rites of the Church. They belong to the whole People of God. They ensure that we remain united in oneness of faith and creed as Christ wills. Our archbishop, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, is very passionate about the unity of the Church, and has said so on numerous occasions. He is correct in advocating unity of Catholics, for which Jesus himself prayed (John 17). Sacraments are a major aspect of what unites us.

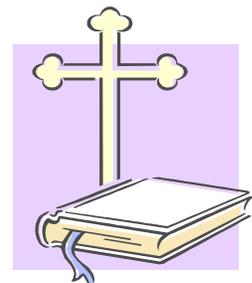
Further, our archdiocesan *Pastoral Manual* and *Sacramental Guidelines* give us the “script”, approved by Cardinal DiNardo, on how we are to carry out the ministry of the Church. Some directives are immutable; for example, no one would think of substituting milk and cookies instead of bread and wine used at the Eucharist. Application of other guidelines depend on an individual person's need; for example, adult baptism is almost always held only at the Easter Vigil, but if a person has certain disabilities or other special needs, it may be more appropriate to celebrate baptism at another time during the Easter season. In the areas in which flexibility is allowed, pastoral experience and common sense guide our actions. When in doubt, the archdiocesan Office of Worship, CCE Office, the Chancery (the administrative office of our archdiocese) are ready to assist us if we need clarification on certain points (and they frequently do). This is one of the things your DSF funds pay for.

You and your family have the right to be served at St. Mary Magdalene parish if you are a parishioner here, especially when it comes to receiving sacraments. You can be served by St. Mary Magdalene parish if you live within the designated geographical boundaries of the parish, whether or not you are registered here (though we greatly encourage you to register because it helps us budget and provide services). If you do not live in the physical boundaries of the parish, you are considered a parishioner if you are currently registered, regularly attending Mass, and contributing to the support of the parish. Persons who are not members of the parish are kindly directed to seek sacraments in their own home parish because under Canon Law (Church law) they are under the spiritual care of their pastor. For this reason, persons who are not parishioners wishing to marry or baptize a child at St. Mary Magdalene must obtain written permission from their own pastor in order to celebrate sacraments here. This is not an effort to turn people away, but to encourage them to participate in the faith community to which they belong. Sacraments cannot be received in “thin air”; by their very nature they connect us to a group of people who also profess faith in Jesus Christ. There are no “drive through” sacraments. A sacrament is not a “thing” one comes to church to get. It is not a commodity. It is not something you receive as individual, apart from other Christians. In receiving a sacrament, a Christian throws in his lot with other Christians who also pledge to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This puts us in a very special relationship with one another. Those people whom we worship and serve are indeed our brothers and sisters in Christ, because in Jesus we are all family (Romans 12:4-6; I Corinthians 12:12-27).

Need Sacraments? Here's what you need to do:

BAPTISM for infants and children through age 6 – pick up Baptism Welcome Packet at the front office; fill out registration form for parents to attend Baptism Retreat. Do this during pregnancy so that your child can be baptized within the first few months of life.

BAPTISM for children 7 years old and older – Parents fill out the form “Parent Request for Children's Baptism”. You will receive word when Parent Orientation will be held (usually in May, June and August). Children are expected to attend at least one year of CCE before preparing for Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation, in the RCIA process.



BAPTISM for adults – Fill out the form “Initial Inquiry About Becoming Catholic.” You will be advised when the next RCIA Inquiry group starts. (We have four start dates each year.) You will prepare for Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation, in RCIA. **You may also call or write the parish office.**

First RECONCILIATION for children – Must have completed at least one year of CCE, be enrolled in CCE and attend Sacrament Prep classes. **RECONCILIATION for adults – Reconciliation for adults (and children who have made their first reconciliation)** – Tuesday 5:45 PM and Saturday 4:00 PM (Ask a priest, if you need help.) Every practicing Catholic should seek this sacrament.

FIRST EUCHARIST for children - Must have completed at least one year of CCE, be enrolled in CCE and attend Sacrament Prep classes. **FIRST EUCHARIST for adults** – Fill out the form “Initial Inquiry About Becoming Catholic.” You will be contacted about starting RCIA to prepare for both Eucharist and Confirmation.

CONFIRMATION for teens - Must have completed at least one year of CCE, be enrolled in CCE and attend Sacrament Prep classes. **CONFIRMATION for baptized adults who have received First Eucharist** –Adult Confirmations are celebrated in the spring. Orientation is July 25; we start August 8. Contact Ivana for details.

ANOINTING of the SICK – call the parish office to schedule with a priest.

MARRIAGE – Pick up a Marriage Prep welcome packet at the front office, fill out registration form to attend Marriage Prep sessions. See Fr. Mike’s secretary, Jackie LeMoine, if you have questions.

HOLY ORDERS – Talk to any priest or deacon, or visit: www.houstonvocations.com