

**Sacramental and Liturgical Guidelines
for Catholic High Schools in the
Archdiocese of St. Louis**

*Prepared by the Office of Sacred Worship
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Introduction

Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of St. Louis play a role in fostering the spiritual growth of students by providing a strong foundation in faith, worship, and service. As institutions rooted in the teachings of Christ and the traditions of the Catholic Church, our schools are committed to upholding the sacred nature of the sacraments, the Order of Christian Initiation, and various liturgical services.

This booklet serves as a guide to ensure that all sacramental and liturgical practices within our schools align with the teachings of the Church and the directives of the archdiocese.

This document outlines the guidelines and procedures related to:

- The Sacraments, in particular baptisms and weddings; and funerals.
- The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA), supporting students and staff on their journey into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- The role of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ensuring their formation and adherence to liturgical norms.
- Guidelines for other liturgical services, including school Masses, prayer services, and devotional practices that nurture a vibrant faith community.

By adhering to these guidelines, we seek to cultivate an environment where students, faculty, and staff can deepen their relationship with Christ, participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church, and grow as faithful witnesses to the Gospel.

May this booklet serve as a resource for fostering a spirit of reverence, unity, and devotion in all liturgical celebrations within our schools.

The Sacrament of Baptism

As stated in Canon 857: §1. “Apart from a case of necessity, the proper place for baptism is a church or an oratory. §2. As a rule, and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, an adult is to be baptized in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents.”

The reason why Baptism is to be celebrated in the territorial parish church is “because: 1) of the particular character recognized to the parish in the Code [of Canon Law] as center of initiation of the spiritual and sacramental life of the faithful; 2) it is normally in a parish where the faithful continue their sacramental itinerary; 3) in the parish it is possible to develop an effective

baptismal pastoral program” (M. Blanco, Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law Vol. 111/1, p. 447).

As the *Rite of Baptism* indicates, “So that baptism may clearly appear as the sacrament of the Church’s faith and of incorporation into the people of God, it should normally be celebrated in the parish church, which must have a baptismal font (*Introduction* 10).

Relatedly, the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* no. 10 establishes: “...baptism shall be celebrated in the parish church, which must have a baptismal font; in this way, it will be clearly seen that Baptism is a sacrament of the faith of the Church and of incorporation to the people of God.” Those who are baptized are inserted into a parish and not a high school.

Therefore, a baptism performed in a Catholic high school is not allowed, except in a case of proximate danger of death. In this situation, the high school must inform the territorial parish about the baptism and provide the necessary information.

(NB: A listing of high schools and corresponding territorial parishes is found in the Appendix on page 11.)

The Sacrament of Marriage

It is a great blessing that our Catholic high schools can maintain a chapel for the use of students, faculty, staff, and benefactors to experience God’s presence, grow in faith, and discover lasting peace.

Marriages are normally to be celebrated in the parish church of either of the parties (*cf.*, canon 1115).

The Pontifical Council for the Family provides the reasoning:

In order to make the Church visible in the diocese and articulate this in the parishes, it is understandable that all the canonical-pastoral preparation for marriage should culminate in the parish and diocese. Thus it is more in conformity with the ecclesial meaning of the sacrament for the marriage to be celebrated normally in the church of the parish community to which the spouses belong (*CIC*, Canon 1115). It is desirable that the whole parish community take part in this celebration, around the families and friends of the engaged. (Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, 54)

Marriage is not permitted to be celebrated outside a parish church; thus, weddings cannot be celebrated in a Catholic high school chapel.

Funerals

As with weddings, a Funeral Mass is to be celebrated in the parish church. The *Order of Christian Funerals* does provide for a Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass which may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, a funeral home, parlor, chapel of rest, or cemetery chapel.

The only time in which it would be permissible to celebrate a Funeral Mass in a high school gymnasium, performance hall, or other large space in one of our Catholic high schools would be when the parish church is unable to comfortably accommodate the number of those attending. This would probably be the situation when there is the death of current or recently graduated student or a current or recently retired faculty or staff member.

In addition, it is permissible for the funeral Mass of a member of the religious order which sponsors a particular Catholic high school to take place in the high school chapel. For example, a member of the Jesuit Order may have his funeral celebrated at the chapel of Saint Louis University High School.

To celebrate a Funeral Mass in a high school setting would be a decision made in conjunction with the pastor of the parish in which the high school resides, family members, school administration, and funeral home personnel.

Should a funeral be held in a high school facility, it is the responsibility of the territorial pastor to make sure the priest/deacon who is celebrating the funeral is in good standing and has produced a letter of good standing, if necessary. It is also the responsibility of the proper pastor and high school administration to make sure the funeral is recorded in the records of the territorial parish.

Communion Services in the High School

Every priest knows the great privilege it is to celebrate Mass on Sunday for the faithful, as well as daily.

Legitimate occasions, however, arise when a priest cannot be available for a scheduled high school Mass. These include times for priests to be away from the parish, such as retreats, workshops, and vacation, as well as pressing pastoral needs and the weekly day off. These occasions when Mass cannot be celebrated require a pastoral response for the benefit of both the priest and the faithful.

When a scheduled high school Mass cannot be celebrated because of a last-minute cancellation and another priest cannot be found, then the territorial pastor may permit a Communion Service consisting of the Liturgy of the Word with the distribution of Holy Communion.

A Communion Service is an exception and is not to be scheduled on a regular basis, either in a parish or high school setting. The theological and liturgical primacy of the reception of Holy Communion during Mass is rightly safeguarded when a Communion Service occurs only by a way of exception.

When there is the need for a Communion Service, deacons and, in their absence, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, may be delegated by the local pastor to provide for it. Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be prepared in advance according to the proper liturgical rites.

When a scheduled high school Mass is cancelled, other laudable liturgical practices would include the Liturgy of the Hours, a Liturgy of the Word, Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, or the communal recitation of the Rosary, among others.

If a high school does decide to have a one-time Communion Service, please contact the Office of Sacred Worship (314-792-7231).

Sunday Mass in a Catholic High School

Canon 1247 specifies that on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass. In addition, according to canon law, Catholics are generally expected to worship with a parish, a defined territorial unit where a parish priest leads the liturgy and care for the community of the faithful under his charge.

The parish community is essential because it provides a community, belonging, and support. The parish allows the faithful to deepen their faith through shared sacraments, fellowship with other parishioners, access to pastoral and spiritual guidance, a place to receive spiritual nourishment, meaningful relationships, the opportunity to serve others in the name of Christ, and various means of active participation in the life of the parish.

Therefore, Sunday Masses celebrated on a regular basis at our Catholic high schools is not allowed as it takes away from the importance of parish participation.

However, there are exceptions to this during a school's academic year; for example, Parents and/or Grandparents Mass, Homecoming/Alumni Mass, Baccalaureate and/or Graduation Mass.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the High School

High school campus ministers play a vital role in identifying and fostering students with leadership and ministerial qualities. Through their guidance,

students are encouraged to deepen their faith, develop a spirit of service, and embrace leadership roles within their school and parish communities. As such, it is encouraged that high school and parish communities have conversations regarding these proposed candidates who by their ministries benefit both communities.

Campus ministers are particularly instrumental in recognizing students who exhibit the reverence, responsibility, and faith commitment necessary to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC). By mentoring and equipping these students, campus ministers help cultivate future Church leaders who continue to serve with devotion and humility.

Having high school students function as EMHCs can serve as a catechetical moment for other students at the high school. Campus ministers should assist eligible students in contacting their parish for the necessary training, commissioning, and submitting of names to the Office of the Archbishop. This is so that after the student's graduation from high school, he/she will be able to continue this ministry in his/her respective parish, if desired and needed.

Although trained and commissioned in their respective parishes, high school campus ministry departments can commission these same students for service as EMHCs at school liturgies.

In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the minimum age for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is eighteen (as of October 1997).

For this reason, the age requirement as stated by the archdiocese remains in effect. The age of eighteen allows these EMHCs to serve as good role models and leaders of adult service in the Church to their respective high school community.

If a high school campus ministry department desires to commission a group of eighteen-year-old students for service to the school community, please contact the Office of Sacred Worship for a Rite of Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)

Requests have come from high schools to prepare candidates for Confirmation who missed the sacrament for various reasons and/or parishes that had no programs for preparing high school students for Confirmation or the other Sacraments of Initiation.

The rite notes that catechesis can be done in settings other than the parish, for example, long-term senior residences, prisons, catechetical centers. The high school would certainly meet the qualifications of a catechetical center.

While preparations can be done in a variety of settings, the living of the Christian life needs to be connected to a parish. The pastor of the student's parish needs to agree to the student's formation at the particular school and to include the student in the parish-based celebration of the appropriate rites (scrutinies, Rite of Election (Enrollment of Names) at the Cathedral Basilica, etc.) The student needs to attend the Sunday liturgies each week at his/her respective parish and participate in the life of the parish as best the student is able.

Students Who Are Not Baptized

For students who are not baptized, the Catholic high school campus ministry department should assist the student in contacting the local Catholic parish near the student's residence to connect the student to the local Catholic parish's OCIA.

If the local Catholic parish does not offer the student Christian initiation preparation, the high school has two options:

1. Assist the student in connecting to another Catholic parish that will welcome the student in the parish's OCIA process. Or
2. Assist the student in asking permission of the Pastor of their local Catholic parish for the student to participate in the OCIA process that the Catholic high school offers, while participating in the catechumenate process and life of the particular parish.

When the student completes the OCIA classes at the Catholic high school, the Elect receives all three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil Mass at their local parish – NOT the Catholic high school. This is for the theological and sacramental reason that such students are inserted into the sacramental life of a parish, not a high school.

Campus ministers, students, faculty, and staff play a crucial role in the sacramental journey of students desiring to become Catholic. Through prayer, mentorship, and faith formation, they provide guidance and encouragement through the Catholic high school OCIA process. Their involvement fosters a welcoming and supportive community, which helps these students deepen their faith and fully embrace their new spiritual path. As a sign of unity and encouragement, these individuals, and members of the school community, should attend the Easter Vigil liturgy at the local parish as these students receive the Sacraments of Initiation and fully enter into the life of the Church.

Following their reception of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil Liturgy, the newly initiated Catholics should be recognized at an all-school

Mass as a sign of support and celebration from the entire school community. This special acknowledgment not only affirms their commitment to the faith, but strengthens the sense of unity in the school community. A simple blessing, a presentation of a religious image, or just a moment of recognition during Mass would allow fellow students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to show their encouragement and joy for these new members of the Church and reinforcing the school's commitment to faith and community.

Furthering the sign of unity, the high school community should be mindful to invite those members of the student's parish community involved in their faith formation for this Mass of special recognition.

Students Who Are Already Baptized

This information pertains to validly baptized Protestant or Catholic students who need to make a Profession of Faith (validly baptized Protestants), First Holy Communion, and Confirmation.

As noted in the previous section, the Catholic high school campus ministry department should assist the student in contacting the local Catholic parish near the student's residence to seek preparation from the parish's OCIA process.

If the local Catholic parish does not offer the student sacramental preparation, the high school has two options:

1. Assist the student in connecting to another Catholic parish to seek sacramental preparation. OR
2. Assist the student in asking **permission of the Pastor** of their local Catholic parish for the student to participate in the OCIA process that the high school offers, while participating in the catechumenate process and life of the particular parish.

When the student completes the sacramental preparation process, the Candidate receives the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at a Mass at the local Catholic parish of the OCIA candidate.

Campus ministers, students, faculty, and staff should be encouraged to participate in the celebration of the students' reception of full communion into the Church and reception of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Their presence demonstrates the school community's support and affirms the students' commitment to their faith. By celebrating together, the school strengthens its role in nurturing and fostering the spiritual growth and development of its students.

High School OCIA Process Summary

Catholic high schools may offer sacramental preparation with the approval of the Archbishop. These students should contact the parish in which they live during the period of inquiry before they enter the catechumenate or become a candidate.

With permission of the proper pastor, the student may be catechized at a Catholic high school. The students should also have an appropriate sponsor to accompany them.

Students would also normally participate in the catechumenal life of the parish (Sunday dismissal from Mass for reflection on the scriptures and service projects,) and the celebrations of the appropriate rites.

Additional information, guidance, rites, and assistance with the OCIA process is available from the Director of the Office of Christian Initiation at 314-792-7235.

Additional Liturgical Concerns or Assistance

The Office of Sacred Worship is pleased to offer resources and assistance for all liturgical celebrations and related concerns within our Catholic high schools in the archdiocese.

Whether guidance is needed in planning school Masses, prayer services, sacramental celebrations, or other liturgical events, the Office is here to support you.

The Office of Sacred Worship provides materials, training, and consultation to ensure that your liturgies are celebrated with reverence and in accordance with the Church's guidelines.

High school campus ministry departments are encouraged to reach out with any questions or needs regarding liturgical planning, music, formation for liturgical ministers, or any other worship-related matters.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance in partnering with you in fostering meaningful and faithful liturgical experiences for your school communities.

The Office of Sacred Worship can be reached at: 314-792-7231 or Father Nicholas Smith at 314-792-7232 nicholassmith@archstl.org

Conclusion

The Office of the Archbishop and the Office of Sacred Worship are grateful for your dedication to fostering the liturgical and sacramental life of your school communities.

We are committed to supporting you in all matters related to the celebration of the sacraments, the formation of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, and the planning of school Masses and other liturgical celebrations.

We also hope this booklet highlights the importance of both high school community and parish community working together for the greater good of the faith formation of your students.

Together, let us continue to cultivate a deep and meaningful experience of faith for the students, faculty, and staff entrusted to our care.

Appendix

Catholic High Schools in the Archdiocese of St. Louis and Territorial Parishes

High School

Bishop DuBourg High School
Cardinal Ritter College Prep
Chaminade College Prep School
Christian Brothers College H.S.
Cor Jesu Academy
DeSmet Jesuit High School
Duchesne High School
Incarnate Word Academy
Nerinx Hall High School
Notre Dame High School
Rosati-Kain Academy
Saint Dominic High School
Saint Francis Borgia Regional
Saint John Vianney High School
Saint Joseph's Academy
Saint Louis Priory School
Saint Louis University H.S.
Saint Mary's South Side
Saint Pius X High School
Saint Vincent High School
Ursuline Academy
Valle Catholic High School
Villa Duchesne
Visitation Academy

Territorial Parish

Saint Raphael the Archangel
Saint Francis Xavier (College) Church
Our Lady of the Pillar
Saint Anselm
Seven Holy Founders
Saint Monica
Saint Peter (St. Charles)
Saint Ann (Normandy)
Holy Redeemer
Saint Martin of Tours
Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis
Assumption (O'Fallon)
Saint Francis Borgia (Washington)
Saint Peter (Kirkwood)
Our Lady of the Pillar
Saint Anselm
Saint James the Greater
Saint Stephen Protomartyr
Sacred Heart (Crystal City)
Saint Vincent de Paul (Perryville)
Mary Queen of Peace
Ste. Genevieve
Our Lady of the Pillar
Saint Anselm