

February 8, 2006

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Recently, a few parents have questioned St. Mary Interparochial School's policy about reception of Sacraments by students. The policy is actually an Archdiocesan one.

In late 2002 and early 2003, Father Bellopede and I engaged in a series of meetings with the then-Vicar of Philadelphia South, Msgr. Thomas Conway with regard to the reception of Sacraments by the children of our school. It was decided at that time that the children of this school would be prepared for sacraments here at school, but that the children should receive the sacraments within the welcoming environment of their parish community. This was not a new policy for the Archdiocese, just one that had not been observed at St. Mary's for a number of years. For some families this can be problematic, but we encourage each family to meet with their pastor, attend Sunday Mass at their parish Church, work on a parish committee and make the friendships and the connections that make a parish work and make us feel part of the parish family.

When this policy was defined for the children of St. Mary Interparochial School, we decided to grandfather in all "current students", which meant those children who were in our Grades 1 and K at that time. Our present second grade will be the last group of children to receive First Eucharist as a class at St. Mary's.

When you completed the application for your child's enrollment at St. Mary's, you signed off on a statement that says that we will prepare your child to receive the sacraments, but that your child will receive those sacraments at your home parish. Our handbook states the same policy.

Again, this policy is not new, just newly observed at this school. It is and has been the policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for many years.

In June of this year, we will notify your pastors that your children will be prepared to receive First Penance and First Eucharist during the next school year and that you will be getting in touch with the pastor to make arrangements for the reception of these two sacraments at your parish. We congratulate you for making this faith journey with your children and as always, we will help you in any way that we can to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child.

May God continue to bless our school community and your parish community.

Sincerely,

Rev. Louis P. Bellopede
Pastor Delegate

Mrs. Jeanne Meredith
Principal