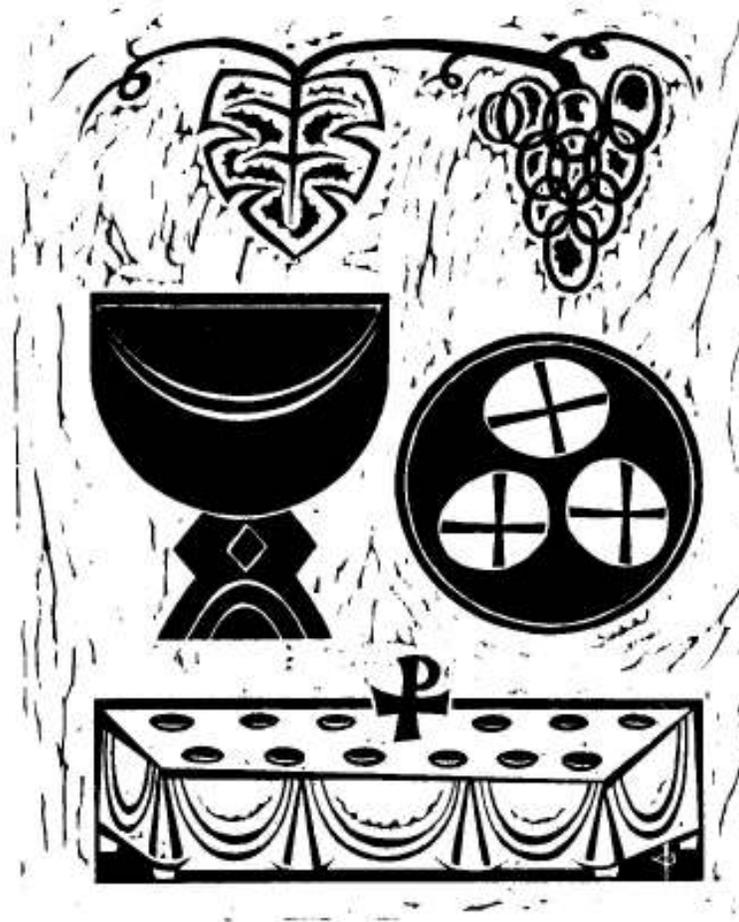


# FIRST RECEPTION OF THE EUCHARIST



## POLICIES AND GUIDELINES For FIRST RECEPTION OF SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

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# THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST EUCHARIST

## INTRODUCTION

*"I myself am the living bread come down from heaven.  
If anyone eats this bread, he shall live forever;  
The bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."  
John 6:51*

## OVERVIEW

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states that the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Church's life. To say that the Eucharist is the source of our lives as Catholic Christians means that our spirituality begins with, or flows from, the Eucharist. And to say that Eucharist is the summit of our Christian Spirituality, is to say that the Eucharist is the highpoint to which everything we do is to be directed. This summit can only be reached by the grace that comes from the source of God's gift of himself to man, and from man's faithful response to God. This intimate union between God and man is called communion. It has the Eucharist as its source and it is directed to the Eucharist as its summit.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses various names for the Eucharist. Each name evokes certain aspects. It is called:

- *Eucharist* – because it is an act of thanksgiving to God.
- *The Lord's Supper* – because it is connected to the supper which Jesus took with his disciples the night before he died...and it anticipates the wedding feast of the lamb in the heavenly kingdom.
- *The Breaking of Bread* – because Jesus used this rite when he blessed and broke the bread and gave it to his disciples at the Last Supper, signifying that all who eat this bread, his body, enter into communion with him and form one body in him.
- *The Eucharistic assembly* – because it is celebrated among the assembly of the faithful.
- *The Holy Sacrifice* – because it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.
- *The Holy and Divine Liturgy or Most Blessed Sacrament* – because the Church's liturgy finds its center in the celebration of this sacrament. This is the Sacrament of sacraments.
- *Holy Communion* – because through this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.
- *Holy Mass (Missa)* – because the liturgy concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful to fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

This is a short summary of the meanings given for each name in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For fuller understanding read (CCC 1328-1332).

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Documents are sometimes quoted using the following abbreviations:

- National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)
- Code of Canon Law (Canon)

**NOTE:** In the villages, certain adaptations may have to be made to the guidelines presented here. Regional leaders and their catechists should work together to determine any adaptations.

# RESPONSIBILITIES OF THOSE INVOLVED

## THE CANDIDATE

### POLICY

The candidate for First Eucharist must meet the following requirements:

- Must have prepared for and received the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation before receiving Eucharist for the first time (see CCC1457, NDC 36, B2; Canon 914).
- Must have attained the age of discretion, usually around seven years of age or above (The parents of a minor and the catechetical director, together with the pastor or pastoral coordinator, must determine the child's readiness to receive the sacrament).
- Be baptized
- Be Catholic (candidates baptized in another denomination must make a Profession of Faith)
- Be properly instructed

### GUIDELINES

A child is ready to receive the Sacrament of First Eucharist when the parents, the pastor or pastoral administrator and the catechist have discerned that the child according to his/her capacity:

- Has been prepared for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation prior to First Communion.
- Participates actively and consciously in Sunday Eucharist or Sunday Celebrations (in the absence of a Priest). on a regular basis.
- Understands that the Holy Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.
- Understands that the Eucharist is the commemoration of Christ's last meal with his disciples and a memorial of his sacrifice for our salvation.
- Understands that by sharing in this special meal, we become brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ on earth.

*It is required that they (children) have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion (Canon 913 –§1).*

## PARENTS OF MINORS

### POLICY

Parents have the right and responsibility to:

- Be involved in the preparation of their child.
- Be models for their child in their faith life.
- Discern, with the pastor or pastoral administrator and the catechetical director, their child's readiness to prepare and receive the sacrament of Eucharist.
- In extraordinary circumstances (discerned with the pastor or pastoral administrator) designate another adult to fulfill this responsibility.

*It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as of the pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession; it is also for the pastor to be vigilant lest any children come to the Holy Banquet who have not reached the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed (Canon 914).*

## **GUIDELINES**

Parents are the first educators of their children. Every family is different and their participation in the life of the Church can vary according to their circumstances. Pastoral consideration of their faith life is important.

Parents should be encouraged to:

- Share their faith story with their child.
- Participate in Sunday Eucharist or Sunday Celebrations (in the absence of a priest) with their child.
- Model a Christian commitment of prayer, community worship, and service.
- Be committed to help their child meet the attendance and formation requirements for the Sacrament of First Eucharist.
- Pray for, and with, their child.

*Children's preparation for the reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role; in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child's understanding of the Eucharist. Children who participate with their family in the Mass, experience the Eucharistic mystery in an initial way and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer (NDC 36A,3a).*

## **CATECHISTS, PASTORS, PASTORAL ADMINISTRATORS**

### **POLICY**

The responsibility of the catechist is as follows:

- Work with the parents and the pastor or pastoral administrator to determine the child's readiness to prepare for and receive the sacrament of First Eucharist.
- Work toward fulfilling the ongoing requirements of the diocese for certified catechists.

Pastors and Pastoral Administrators are responsible as follows:

- Work with the parents and catechist to determine the child's readiness to be prepared for and to receive the sacrament of First Eucharist.
- Ensure that those who ask for the sacrament of First Eucharist are prepared through proper evangelization and catechetical instruction.
- Determine that the diocesan guidelines for this sacrament are observed.

### **GUIDELINES**

All sacramental religious educators are responsible to:

- Provide catechesis to help the parents carry out their responsibility as first educators of their children.
- Provide adequate instruction and preparation for the sacrament of First Eucharist appropriate to the level of the child.
- Provide sufficient opportunities for the children to receive the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation before the reception of First Eucharist.
- Make every effort to involve the community in the sacramental preparation.

*The catechesis offered should help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to catechize their children more effectively (NDC 36A,3a).*

*For the administration of the Most Holy Eucharist to children it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion (Canon 914§1).*

# SACRAMENTAL FORMATION

## CURRICULUM

### **POLICY**

The textbook used must be on the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) list of textbooks in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and approved for use in the Diocese of Fairbanks.

- The Y-K Delta curriculum is approved for use in that region.

### **GUIDELINES**

Consult the Diocesan Office of Religious Education about any textbooks that are not on the Fairbanks Diocese Approved Texts and Series List.

- Additional books and materials must be approved for use by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education.
- The curriculum must be appropriate to the age and ability of the child.

## PLACE OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

### **POLICY**

Preparation for the Sacrament of First Eucharist is to take place in the parish.

- First Reception of the Eucharist will be celebrated in the parish.
- There must be a preparation process for parents and children in the parish in addition to any ongoing catechetical preparation that takes place in the home and/or the Catholic School.

*Catechesis on the Mass provided in systematic parish catechetical programs is an indispensable part of the preparation of children for their first reception of the Eucharist (NDC 36A,3a).*

## CATECHESIS

### **POLICY**

Catechesis for First Eucharist is to be kept separate from catechesis for First Penance and Reconciliation and, when circumstances allow, it is recommended that it be separate from a religious education program. (e.g. *First Penance and Reconciliation in the Fall and First Communion in the Spring during the Easter Season...NOT on Holy Thursday*)

*...catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation. This is to be done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent and so that, before receiving First Communion, the child will be familiar with the revised Rite of Reconciliation and will be at ease with the reception of the sacrament. (NDC 36B,2).*

### **GUIDELINES**

Essential Teachings

*During planning, it is essential to remember that children around the age of reason ordinarily think concretely. Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis in preparation for the first reception of the Eucharist that:*

- *Teaches that the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples*
- *Teaches not only 'the truths of faith regarding the Eucharist but also how from First Communion on...they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the People of God in the Eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters.*

- Ensures that the baptized have been prepared, according to their capacity, for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation prior to their First Communion
- Develops in children an understanding of the Father's love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit
- Teaches that 'the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ' and that 'what appear to be bread and wine are actually His living body'
- Teaches the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread
- Teaches the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species of bread and wine
- Helps them to participate actively and consciously in the Mass (Sunday Celebrations)
- Helps children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner (NDC 36, B2).

Children and parents MUST understand that conversion is a lifelong process, and that catechesis for the Sacrament of Eucharist is to be ongoing.

### **FAMILY COMPONENT**

#### **POLICY**

There is to be a component to help parents grow in their understanding and appreciation of their right and responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for the Sacrament of First Penance and Reconciliation.

- Enable them to participate readily in catechizing their children.
- A time of retreat shall be planned for parents and their children before the celebration of First Eucharist

*Children's preparation for first reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child's understanding of the Eucharist. Children who participate with their family in the Mass experience the Eucharistic mystery in an initial way and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer (NDC 36A, 3a).*

#### **GUIDELINES**

The role and importance of the family should be highlighted and affirmed while, at the same time, reinforcing the parents understanding of the Sacrament of Eucharist.

Classes with parents should include the following:

- Instruction about the ritual, symbols, and structure of the Mass
- Understanding of the presence of Jesus in the Word, in the people assembled, in the bread and wine, and in the priest
- Example in living as a Eucharistic people
- Connection of the family table to the Table of the Lord at Church
- A time of retreat should be set apart for the parents and children to reflect on the Sacrament of Eucharist. The presentations and prayers should be suited to the children's age level and should include:
  - ❖ Prayer, listening and discussion.
  - ❖ Practice on how to receive the Sacrament, including the norm in the United States of bowing in respect before receiving.

#### **IMPORTANT PASTORAL CONSIDERATION**

If, for any reason, a meeting with the child and parents was not arranged before First Penance and Reconciliation, it is important that it be done very early in the preparation for First Eucharist. The pastor, pastoral administrator, or other delegated person may conduct this interview.

# CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

*All gather together. Christians come together in one place for the Eucharistic assembly. At its head is Christ himself...the bishop or priest, acting in the person of Christ the head, presides over the assembly...All have their own active parts to play in the celebration, each in his own way: readers, those who bring up the offerings, those who give communion, and the whole people whose "Amen" manifests their participation (CCC 1348).*

## **COMMUNITY CELEBRATION**

### **POLICY**

The celebration of First Eucharist is the celebration of the whole Christian community welcoming the first communicant(s).

- The celebration of First Eucharist should be held at a regularly scheduled Sunday parish Mass or Saturday night vigil Mass.
- It is important that the community is made aware of the presence of the first communicant(s).

### **GUIDELINES**

Possible opportunities for recognition of a first communicant might be:

- The greeting
- The entrance procession
- The homily
- The prayers of intercession
- Calling forth the family/families at the time of reception of communion

The parish is to provide an appropriate opportunity following the celebration of the sacrament for the faith community to express their joy and solidarity with the child/children and their families.

### **POLICY**

Both the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine are to be offered.

### **GUIDELINES**

A fuller significance of Eucharist is expressed by reception of both the Body and Blood of our Lord.

- Both species are to be offered.
- Children who receive are subject to parental discretion.

### **POLICY**

There is no specific requirement in the revised Code of Canon Law for First Eucharist to be recorded. However, American pastoral practice, especially in view of the highly mobile population, suggests that keeping records of first Eucharists should be encouraged. In the Diocese of Fairbanks, first Eucharists are to be recorded.

### **GUIDELINES**

The practice of recording First Reception of the Eucharist is to be retained in each parish of the Diocese of Fairbanks.

- Every parish should have a register with a place for recording first communions.
- It is recommended that certificates also be given for the family records.

# **POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

## **CHILDREN WHO ARE HOME SCHOOLED**

*Whether their children attend a parish religious education program, a Catholic school, or are instructed at home, parents are required to participate actively in preparing their children to receive the sacraments, especially First Confession, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. This includes participation in the parish sacramental preparation programs and sacramental celebrations. In light of the entire process for catechesis to include the four components of knowledge, community, service and worship, home schooling alone cannot replace catechesis or sacramental preparation in the parish church (see NCD 32; GCD 17; CT 202-26).*

### **POLICY**

Keeping in mind that parents are the primary educators of their children in the ways of faith, we also recognize that the sacraments are most properly celebrated within the parish community. The rights and responsibilities of all concerned, parents, pastors and parish, calls for everyone to work together in this endeavor.

### **GUIDELINES**

Materials must be on the approved list provided by the Office of Religious Education.

- The preferred text will be the one used in the parish religious education program.
- The pastor or pastoral administrator will approve the home program and texts.
- The home schoolers will follow the Religion Education Guidelines for the Diocese.
- The pastor, pastoral administrator or delegate will meet periodically with the home schoolers to review the progress of the program.

Reception of the sacraments will be celebrated in the family's parish of registration.

*In accord with the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the pastor is to make particular provision:*

*1° that suitable catechesis is given for the celebration of the sacraments;*

*2° that children are properly prepared for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and Most Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of confirmation by means of a catechetical formation given over an appropriate period of time;*

*3° children are more fruitfully and deeply instructed through catechetical formation after the reception of First Communion (Canon 777.1.2.3.).*

## **PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

*Persons with developmental disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community (see Canon 213). Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them (see Canon 843, §1)*

### **POLICY**

Persons with developmental or mental disabilities are to be encouraged either directly or through their parents or guardian to receive the Sacraments at the appropriate time.

### **GUIDELINES**

Parents, guardians, pastors and pastoral administrators have the responsibility to see that persons with disabilities are welcomed by the community, are appropriately prepared, and are properly disposed to receive the sacrament for which they are being prepared.

- Fullness of initiation, and the grace received from it, is of greater value than program preparation.
- Suitable instruction, directly related to the celebration of the sacrament and appropriate to the developmental need of the individual, is to take place.
- *Pastors, pastoral administrators or their delegates are to consult with the Diocesan Office regarding decisions that will make exemptions to the stated diocesan policy.*