

Guidelines
for the
Preparation and Celebration
of the
Sacrament of Eucharist
for the
Diocese of Fort Worth

The Sacrament of Eucharist

Table of Contents

<u>DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW</u>	1
HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST	3
THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST, CORRELATION WITH <i>THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH</i> , AND IMPLICATION FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PREPARATION	4
<u>PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES</u>	10
GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES	10
PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION	10
<u>POLICIES</u>	12
THE CANDIDATE.....	12
THE PARISH.....	12
<u>NORMS FOR READINESS</u>	15
<u>THE RITE: RITUAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION</u>	16
GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES	16
LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.....	16

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

I. Doctrinal Overview

Christ is the sacrament of God. The Church is the sacrament of Christ. Through Baptism Christ gives us life and through the Eucharist Christ nourishes life abundantly. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10) Through the Eucharist Christ's life, death and resurrection are made real, are made present, and are offered sacramentally. In the Eucharist, Christ unites his Church and all her members with his work of salvation. All ministries and sacraments of the Church are bound up with the Eucharist in which Christ, acting through the ministry of the priesthood, gives himself as an offering to the Father. Through Eucharist the faithful individually and communally renew their promise to conform their lives to Christ. Through the Liturgies of the Word and of the Eucharist the events of Christ's life are made present. It is through the community whose unity is created by the Eucharist that the faithful are commissioned and empowered to evangelize. In Holy Communion, Christ completes the initiation of the faithful, nourishes them throughout their lives, and consoles them at the time of death with Viaticum.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides various names for the Eucharist (cf. CCC 1328-1332):

What is this sacrament called?

The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words eucharistein (Cf. Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24) and eulogein (Cf. Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. (CCC 1328)

The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9).

The Breaking of Bread, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal, when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19.), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17).

The Eucharistic assembly (synaxis), because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). (CCC 1329)

The memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. The terms holy sacrifice of the Mass, "sacrifice of praise," spiritual sacrifice, pure and holy sacrifice are also used (Heb 13:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Ps 116:13, 17; Mal 1:11), since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The Holy and Divine Liturgy, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the Sacred Mysteries. We speak of the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name. (CCC 1330)

Holy Communion, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17). We also call it: the holy things (ta hagia; sancta) (Apostolic Constitutions 8, 13, 12: PG 1, 1108; Didache 9, 5; 10:6: SCh 248, 176-178) - the first meaning of the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed - the bread of angels, bread from heaven, medicine of immortality, (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 20, 2: SCh 10, 76) viaticum. . . (CCC 1331)

Holy Mass (Missa), because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives." (CCC 1332)

A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

1. Summary from the Last Supper to 100 A.D.
 - a. Jesus uses Jewish Passover meal in a new way to express New Covenant; new relationship between God and humankind.
 - b. Jesus asked faith of followers during this meal that through his word, bread and wine make him present.
 - c. The new Passover meal or Eucharist is celebrated primarily in homes as a meal of unity among believers.
 - d. The ritual of Eucharist:
 - 1) readings from Old Testament
 - 2) readings from letters and gospels that later became the New Testament
 - 3) explanation or homily about readings and teachings of Jesus
 - 4) sharing Jesus' presence through bread and wine in context of a meal— at first an actual meal and later a stylized one
2. Summary from 100-600 A.D.
 - a. Eucharist celebrated in homes, very simply until 313.
 - b. Eucharist taken in hand and often taken home to sick or for communion during week.
 - c. The Eucharist is not celebrated daily.
 - d. In 313, public buildings used for the Eucharist.
 - e. Prayers and rituals become more formalized rather than spontaneous.
 - f. Renewal needed even by 384 when the Eucharistic celebration is changed from Greek to Latin
3. Summary from 600 to 1850 A.D.
 - a. Style of prayer changes
 - 1) end to period of improvisation
 - 2) prayers compiled and formalized
 - 3) concern over minor details in rite
 - b. Gulf between clergy and people because of
 - 1) elaboration and complication of ceremonies
 - 2) clergy rose in social status beyond laity
 - 3) bishops take on style of princes

- c. Laity felt unworthy to receive communion, therefore, Easter Duty promulgated in 1212.

4. Vatican II

The modern day movement for renewal was officially accepted in 1962 when the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council:

- a. Recognized the need for use of the vernacular for intelligent participation.
- b. Encouraged reception of Communion as part of each Eucharist under appearance of both with bread and wine.
- c. Urged greater use of Scripture and preaching.
- d. Priest facing people to underline once again the communal aspect of the Eucharist.
- e. The Prayer of the Faithful to encourage spontaneous prayer and the Kiss of Peace to express our fellowship.

Adapted from *The Changing Sacraments*. Reprinted by permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1615 Republic Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45210. All rights reserved

B. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST, CORRELATION WITH *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PREPARATION

1. The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life.

- All sacraments and all ministries are oriented to the Eucharist.
- Eucharist is both a sign and a cause of communion.
- Eucharist is an anticipation of eternal life.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1324: *The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” (LG 11) “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.” (PO 5)*

CCC 1325: *“The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.” (Congregation of Rites, instruction, Eucharisticum Mysterium, 6.)*

CCC 1326: Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:28)

Implications:

In catechesis, the Eucharist is recognized and taught as the central mystery of the Church. It unites the Body of Christ in a common union that celebrates the member's anticipation of eternal life. It strengthens and compels the faithful to witness to the gospel in the world.

2. The Eucharist in God's plan of salvation.

- The signs of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.
- The Sunday Eucharist is the center of the Church's life.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1333: At the heart of the Eucharistic 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. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread . . ." "He took the cup filled with wine. . . ." The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, (Cf. Ps 104:13-15.) fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine" – gifts of the Creator. The Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering. (Gen 14:18; cf. Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 95.)

CCC 1337: The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love. (Cf. Jn 13:1-17; 34-35.) In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and Resurrection, and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return; "thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament." (Council of Trent (1562): DS 1740.)

CCC 1343: It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection that the Christians met "to break bread." (Acts 20:7) From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life.

Implications:

By celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, itself formational, the faithful continue to follow in the footsteps of the first Christians. Following the example of the early Christians, the assembly gathers together to proclaim the Paschal Mystery. The Holy Spirit consecrates not only bread and wine, but hallows the family of Christ. The Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation unite God and his people in an unbreakable bond.

3. The Eucharist is thanksgiving, memorial, sacrifice and Christ's presence.

- The Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving to the Father.
- The Eucharistic meal is a memorial of Christ's Passover.
- The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the words of institution.
- The whole Christ is truly present in the Eucharist.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1360: *The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all "thanksgiving."*

CCC 1364: *In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present. (Cf. Heb 7:25-27.) "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out." (LG 3; cf. 1Cor 5:7.)*

CCC 1365: *Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." (Lk 22:19-20.) In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:28.)*

CCC 1374: *The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III*, 73, 3c.) In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." (Council of Trent (1551: DS 1651.) "This presence is called 'real' – by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by*

Eucharist

which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” (Paul VI, MF 39.)

Implications:

Eucharist, (in Greek, “thanksgiving”), is a celebration of both the thanksgiving sacrifice and memorial banquet of our Lord’s Paschal Mystery. As a meal, Eucharist developed from Jewish meals, particularly the Passover meal. The Jews experience liberation made present every time they celebrate the Passover meal, a living memorial of the Exodus. As a sacrifice, Eucharist makes present Jesus’ body “given for you” and his blood, the New Covenant “poured out for you.” Catechesis will include the following truths regarding Eucharist:
That the whole risen Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the Eucharistic species; That He is present in the proclamation of the word, in the presider, and in the worshipping assembly.

4. There are many fruits derived from Holy Communion.

- Holy Communion augments union with Christ.
- Holy Communion separates us from sin.
- Holy Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens Baptismal union with Christ.
- Holy Communion commits us to social justice.
- Holy Communion is a sacrament of unity.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1391: *Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” (Jn 6:56.) Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.” (Jn 6:57.)*

On the feasts of the Lord, when the faithful receive the Body of the Son, they proclaim to one another the Good News that the first fruits of life have been given, as when the angel said to Mary Magdalene, “Christ is risen!” Now too are life and resurrection conferred on whoever receives Christ. (Fangîth, Syriac Office of Antioch, Vol. I, Commun., 237 a-b.)

CCC 1393: *Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is “given up for us,” and the blood we drink “shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.” For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins:*

For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord’s death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always

*forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.
(St. Ambrose, De Sacr. 4,6,28: PL 16, 446; cf. 1 Cor 11:26.)*

CCC 1396: *The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body – the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. (Cf. 1 Cor12:13.) The Eucharist fulfills this call: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Cor 10:16-17.)*

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond “Amen” (“yes, it is true!”) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, “the Body of Christ’ and respond “Amen.” Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true. (St. Augustine, Sermo 272: PL 38, 1247.)

CCC 1397: *The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren:*

You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother, . . . You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal. . . . God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful. (St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in 1 Cor. 27,4: PG 61, 229-230; cf. Mt 25:40.)

CCC 1398: *The Eucharist and the unity of Christians. Before the greatness of this mystery St. Augustine exclaims, “O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!” (St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 26,13:PL 35, 1613; cf. SC 47.) The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return.*

Implications:

The Eucharist strengthens Christians both as individuals and as Church to live Gospel values, giving a special priority to the poor. The maturing individual will continually grow in appreciation of the sacrament. Formation for children and adults offers opportunities for the participants to express their understanding and reflect upon their experiences. Careful attention should be given to allowing them to name the fruits that they have received and in helping them to see the individual and communal nature of Eucharist.

5. The Eucharist is the pledge of the glory to come.

- The Eucharist is an anticipation of the heavenly glory
- The Lord's presence is veiled now in the Eucharist, but will one day be fully manifest.
- There is no clearer sign of hope in the anticipated glory than participation in the Eucharist.

Correlation with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCC 1402: *In an ancient prayer the Church acclaims the mystery of the Eucharist: "O sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us." If the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passover of the Lord Jesus, if by our communion at the altar we are filled "with every heavenly blessing and grace," (Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 96: Supplices te rogamus.), then the Eucharist is also an anticipation of the heavenly glory.*

CCC 1404: *The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the Eucharist "awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ," (Roman Missal 126, embolism after the Our Father: expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi; cf. Titus 2:13.) asking "to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away. On that day we shall see you, our God, as you are. We shall become like you and praise you for ever through Christ our Lord." (EP III 116: prayer for the dead.)*

CCC 1405: *There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells," (2 Pet 3:13.) than the Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ," (LG 3; St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 20, 2: SCh 10, 76.)*

Implications:

People live in a world beset by hopelessness. For many people, the reality of the Eucharist is dim. Catechists should strive to show that the Eucharist is indeed a sacrament of hope, because even though it is veiled, the pledge of eternal glory is there. The Eucharist "sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints." (CCC 1419)

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for use in the United States of America Copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. -- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with Permission.

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the "Editio Typica" Copyright © 1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. -- Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with Permission.

II. Pastoral and Catechetical Principles

A. GENERAL PASTORAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Effective sacramental preparation:

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, age and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes life-long learning and participation in the sacramental life.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

1. Active participation in the Sunday Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic life.
2. The Risen Christ is present in the proclaimed Word, in the gathered assembly, in the person of the priest, and in a unique way in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine.
3. The Church's desire is for the candidate to celebrate First Holy Communion as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion; normally this is in the second grade.
4. As faith deepens, so does understanding of the Eucharist.
5. The parish community nurtures and supports the faith journey of the candidates and their families and welcomes them to the Table of the Lord.
6. The family is the first and most important teacher in matters of faith.
7. Preparation for and the celebration of First Holy Communion is realized in a pastorally sensitive manner.
8. Effective catechesis requires sensitivity to the local multi-cultural and/or diverse family situations.

9. First Holy Communion is not an isolated event in an individual's life. The ongoing sacramental life of any individual deepens one's relationship with God and the Church.
10. Catechists, including parents, have a right to formation in contemporary theology. Candidates have a right to be taught by catechists who truly reflect the current mind of the Church. (cf. CCC 2037, GDC 234)
11. Continued catechesis on the Eucharist, adapted to the level of the learner, is an integral element of all programs of systematic catechesis.

III. Policies

A. THE CANDIDATE

1. The candidate is a churched, baptized Catholic.
2. The candidate has reached the age of discretion.
3. At least one active Catholic adult must be willing to support a minor's faith journey.
4. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins, candidates must be prepared for, encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so.

B. THE PARISH

1. The parish is responsible for developing and implementing an appropriate preparation process for all parishioners desiring to receive First Holy Communion.
2. Any parishioner who has reached the age of discretion, and has been prepared for and given the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, is eligible and should be invited to participate in sacramental catechesis for First Holy Communion. The Church's desire is for children to celebrate First Holy Communion as early as possible after reaching the age of discretion, that is, about the seventh year of age. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*)
3. The written permission of the candidate's pastor is required before the candidate prepares for, and/or celebrates, First Holy Communion in another parish.
4. Once a candidate has reached the age of discretion and has requested the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, sacramental catechesis and the celebration of each of these sacraments shall occur within a year. (For candidates in the RCIA, please refer to the Diocesan RCIA Guidelines.)
5. Since each sacrament deserves distinct preparation, catechesis for First Holy Communion is conducted separately from catechesis for the sacrament of Penance.
6. 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. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins candidates must be prepared for and encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*)
7. When circumstances allow, a First Communion program that is separate from a graded program has important advantages. It allows for individual readiness to determine

participation in the program rather than requiring a determination based on a particular age or grade. It also encourages the involvement of additional catechists who can specialize in sacramental preparation.

8. The parish is responsible for providing opportunities for involving all its members in the sacramental preparation process.
9. Taking into account the universal criteria as stated in The Catechism of the Catholic Church, the catechetical preparation process and materials must respond to the diversity present in the parish community:
 - a. Learning styles, interests, experiences, and abilities of the candidates and their families (*cf. GDC 148, 149, 170*);
 - b. Language, cultures, and cultural religious practices (*cf. GDC 146, 232*);
 - c. Variety of family structures;
 - d. Candidates who are physically, educationally, and/or psychologically challenged (*cf. GDC 189*);
 - e. The stage of the candidates' psychological and moral development.
10. "The sacraments are 'of the Church' in the double sense that they are 'by her' and 'for her'"(*CCC 1118*). Therefore, the actual and immediate preparation for the sacramental celebration of First Holy Communion must be within the context of the single sacramental program of the parish (*cf. CCC 2179, 2226*). Knowledge about the sacrament can be obtained in different settings, such as, the family, the parish school of religion, or the Catholic school.
11. Catechists who provide the formation of candidates and parents are to be trained in contemporary methodology, moral development, and the theology of the sacrament. (*cf. GDC 234, 235*)
12. Parish leadership has the responsibility to provide suitable opportunities for family involvement and celebration of First Holy Communion. Formation concerning the sacrament of Eucharist must be ongoing throughout all levels of faith formation in the parish.
13. Parents not only have the right but also the responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Holy Communion. Therefore, they should participate in the parish adult pre-sacramental catechesis. (*cf. CCC 2223, 2225*)
14. Content for parent pre-sacramental catechesis meetings should include the following:
 - a. Structure of the Mass

- b. Presence of Jesus: Word/Assembly/Bread-Wine/Priest
 - c. Scriptural Roots of the Eucharist
 - d. Living as a Eucharistic People
 - e. How to Celebrate the Sacrament
15. The celebration of First Holy Communion shall normally take place during a regular Sunday Mass, including the Saturday vigil Mass.
16. The preparation of adults for first reception of the Eucharist is an integral part of the RCIA process.
17. Catechesis concerning the Eucharist must be ongoing throughout formal elementary religious education and a faith theme in adolescent and adult catechesis. This ongoing catechesis should also include:
- a. the importance of Sunday,
 - b. the centrality of the Eucharist,
 - c. the connection of Viaticum to the community celebration of Eucharist,
 - d. deepening of personal spirituality through Eucharistic devotions, i.e., visits to the Blessed Sacrament, participation in times of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
18. The options of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand, and reception of Communion under both species, are to be left to the discretion of the individual communicant.

IV. Norms for Readiness

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. Before sacramental preparation for First Communion begins, candidates must be prepared for, encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and given the opportunity to do so. (*cf. CIC, can. 914*).

The norms for a candidate's readiness are:

1. The candidate demonstrates a desire to celebrate the sacrament of First Eucharist.
2. The candidate demonstrates age-appropriate understanding of the sacrament.
3. The candidate is participating in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy on a regular basis.
4. The candidate knows how to receive communion.

V. The Rite: Ritual Considerations for First Holy Communion

A. GENERAL LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Liturgical celebrations, especially those involving first reception of sacraments, should be undertaken with special care and preparation:
 - a. All the sacraments engage the whole community of faith, even though particular sacraments may be celebrated individually.
 - b. The symbols --- words, gestures, objects, movements, etc. --- of the sacraments should always be lavish.
 - c. Candidates should be involved in the celebration as actively as possible.
2. Liturgical celebrations catechize through the experience.
3. The way sacraments are celebrated should offer welcome and hospitality to all, including those who are not members of the faith community.

B. LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CELEBRATING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

1. Children live and grow in a world of adult rituals: holiday celebrations, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, and graduations. Because these rituals consist of words to hear, songs to sing, things to see and do, they have an appeal for children. In time, they discover their deeper meanings. Children preparing for First Eucharist should share as fully as possible in the richness of the ritual, so that they may begin to experience the realities of union with God and one another in Jesus, which words can only attempt to explain.
2. Prior to the reception of Communion:
 - a. The candidate is free from mortal sin;
 - b. The candidate has observed the rules of fasting requiring that a person refrain from eating all food and from drinking liquids other than water for at least one hour prior to the time to receive Eucharistic Communion.
 - c. The actions/gestures of Eucharist are drawn from everyday life. As children are taught:
 - to greet others warmly,
 - to forgive and ask forgiveness,
 - to listen attentively and to speak their thoughts sincerely,
 - to share what they have,
 - to eat at a common table,
 - to give generously,

- to receive gratefully,
- to celebrate joy,

they are prepared for full participation in the Mass. They should study the Mass in order to see how these actions/gestures are manifested there.

The celebration of First Eucharist is the celebration of the whole Christian community welcoming the first communicant. The celebration of First Eucharist should be held at a regularly scheduled Sunday parish Mass, including the Saturday vigil Mass. It is important that the community is made aware of the presence of the first communicant. Suitable opportunities for first communicant recognition might be: the greeting, the entrance procession, the homily, the prayers of intercession, and/or the calling forth of the family at the time of reception of communion.

MASS OF FIRST COMMUNION

First Communions can be spread throughout the Sunday Masses.

If there are large group communions, care must be taken to insure a reverent atmosphere suited to worship.

When planning group celebrations of First Eucharist, care ought to be taken that the number of children to receive the sacrament does not preclude the presence of the parish community and the families of the children.

- a. Clothing: Simple and appropriate clothing for the children is recommended. Parishes should offer guidelines regarding clothing suitable for the celebration.
- b. Music and singing are normative in liturgical celebrations. The music should be chosen from the parish repertoire. Secular and/or catechetical music is not appropriate for use in the liturgy.