

# Policy on the Preparation for First Communion

*Taken from the Sacramental Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee*

## **Reception of First Communion for Children**

As Children reach the age of reason, generally around the age of seven, the Church extends to them an invitation to celebrate the sacrament of Eucharist, the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us. The initiation into the Christian community that took place at baptism, now is further extended by inviting children to enter fully into the heart of Christian faith through the participation in the Eucharist. It is the responsibility of the parish to set up a program for parents and children preparing for First Communion. If there is a school, there should be one program for parents of school children and parents of children who attend religious education classes.

## **Time For The Celebration Of First Communion**

Since Eucharist is one of the three sacraments of Christian initiation, the Easter season is the most appropriate liturgical time for celebrating First Communion.

A child's celebration of First Communion is to take place at a Sunday Liturgy in the parish church which provides the context of the worshipping community. The celebration is to involve the parish community. First Communion celebrations are not to be celebrated during the season of Lent.

## **Catechetical Preparation for First Communion**

A child in the process of Christian Initiation is led gradually, according to personal capacity, to participate fully in the Eucharist. This continuing formation takes place within family and parish community.

Children commonly participate in a sacramental preparation program for ***at least one year prior to entrance into immediate preparation***. This on-going catechesis, together with the formation parents are providing in the

home, forms the foundation for the immediate catechesis for First Communion.

Children require adequate spiritual and catechetical formation in their preparation for the reception of First Communion. However, the approach is not limited to teaching things about the sacrament but also includes initiation children into a Christian way of living and worshipping in a community. Catechesis leads children to discover the joy of living in communion with God and with others. A child's family and the Christian community's day by day living of the Christian life becomes the first step in a child's preparation to receive this sacrament.

Children under the age of seven tend to think concretely. They grasp concepts like "unity" and "belonging" from experiences such as: sharing, listening, eating, forgiving, conversing, thanking and celebrating.

***This means, in effect, that much of their preparation for First Communion is to be derived from daily life experiences.***

Such life experiences are to be coupled with explanations of Eucharist adapted to children's intellectual capacity and accompanied by further efforts to acquaint them with the main events of Jesus' life.

Children are to be taught that 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. What appears to be bread and wine is actually the living and life-giving body and blood of Christ. Catechists are to teach the Eucharist as the sign of the Lord's abiding presence, which assists in the development of a true Eucharistic devotion.

Appropriate instruction on the Eucharistic fast is to be provided for the children.

***Children are to be helped to participate more meaningfully in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy.*** Catechists need to include instruction about the meaning of the ritual, symbol and party of the Mass. Children benefit by being appropriately involved in Eucharistic liturgies.

## **Preparation at St. Gregory the Great**

Students must be enrolled in either St. Gregory the Great Grade School or Family Lighthouse Program for at least one year before the immediate preparation of the Sacraments

During the year of immediate preparation, students must be enrolled in either St. Gregory the Great Grade School or Family Lighthouse Program.

### **Participation in the following is required as part of the Preparation Program:**

Blessing of Children preparing for Sacraments of Reconciliation & Communion

Prepared and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Four Parent/ Child Sessions

Saturday Morning Parent/ Child Mini Retreat

Loyola Press: God's Gift Eucharist Workbook

Loyola Press: My Mass Booklet

First Communion Rehearsal

First Communion Celebration