

This weekend we celebrate First Holy Eucharist. These children are a good reminder to us that we too should prepare well to receive the Eucharist, forming our hearts and minds, and readying our souls in Confession. They teach us to look forward to receiving the Eucharist with joy. It's a day that will define their year, reminding us that the Eucharist is more important than anything else for us as well. Every year, as we go through the rehearsal, I find it's also a learning moment for the parents. So, here are some reminders for everyone!

**Don't be late to Mass.** Sometimes with little children things happen – I always give young families a pass and am grateful for their heroics of patience and love and constancy. For the rest of us, though, it should be a true rarity. Sometimes things happen with adults too – I didn't set an alarm last year and was late for a Sunday Mass. But can you imagine one of the Apostle's showing up late for the Last Supper, and trying to explain it to Jesus? Show up a little early – spend some time in prayer and prepare for what is to come. **Don't leave Mass early** (before the priest). You just received Jesus. What is so important that you have to rush off? Can you imagine one of the Apostles at the Last Supper telling Jesus they had somewhere they had to be? Say a prayer of thanksgiving before you leave.

As you come forward, **you are about to receive Jesus – focus on Him.** Don't say hi to others along the way. Love God first, and neighbors second. Parents, please keep young children in front of you in line - some have figured out the right moves and try for an early First Communion.

As you approach the priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, **bow your head in reverence to Christ.** When they hold up the Eucharist, **respond with faith – “Amen”** (I believe)! There are two ways of receiving the Eucharist. **To receive on the tongue,** open your mouth up wide enough to receive the host, tip your head back slightly, and rest your tongue on your lower lip. Don't bite or snatch at Jesus. **To receive in your hands,** place your non-dominant hand on top of your dominant hand, and keep both flat – like an altar. After the host is placed in your hand, pick it up with your dominant hand and place the host in your mouth. Do not hold your hands side by side or cupped. Don't shovel Jesus into your mouth. Do not receive Jesus while you are walking. If you only have one hand (holding a baby or a cane), out of concern for the dignity of the Eucharist and concern for dropping Jesus, it is better to receive on the tongue.

If you choose **to receive the Precious Blood,** the sign of the new covenant, once again bow your head in reverence, and then make your firm statement of faith – “Amen.” Then firmly take the cup, take a small sip, and return it – ensuring the person has it firmly before releasing it. Return to your pew. Kneel if you can. Say a prayer of thanksgiving. Join in the hymn of praise. There is no official time to stop kneeling. My general rule is that people can sit after Jesus is returned to the Tabernacle.