

Policy Regarding Children's First Holy Communion

"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 of 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."

National Directory of Catechesis, p. 126

Whereas, for the administration of the Most Holy Eucharistic 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. (Can. 913) and...

Whereas, 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. (Can. 914)...

Therefore, it is the policy of the Diocese of Crookston that, at the judgement of the pastor, parent(s) and catechist, children, having reached the use of reason and having been properly prepared present themselves for First Holy Communion as early as possible, having already celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

A. Essential Roles

1. **Parents, pastors and catechists** as models of faith and Christian witness for their children, have a serious responsibility to grow in their devotion to the Eucharist.
 - a. Catholic parent(s) are expected, as part of their own commitment to discipleship, to participate in the parish Eucharistic celebration each Sunday.
 - b. "Because reception of the Eucharist, especially for the first time, is integral to the child's full incorporation into the ecclesial community, the pastor has a responsibility in determining every child's readiness to receive First Communion." (NCD, 127)

- c. “Parent(s) also have the right and the duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Communion. The catechesis offered should help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to catechize their own children more effectively.” (NCD, 127)
 - d. Parents are expected to participate in all sessions for parents and to share in the total preparation of their child for the reception of First Holy Communion.
 - e. Catechists are to be persons of faith, who live the Eucharistic mystery in their own lives and can witness to the saving power and animating graces of living the Sacramental life.
- 2. Children preparing** for First Eucharist are reminders to the larger faith community of the Church’s call to be nourished by and formed into the body of Christ. They must have completed the course of formation established by the parish before their reception of First Holy Communion.
- 3. Worshipping community of faith:** “the parish Sunday Mass, of Divine Liturgy, is the normative celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is the whole parish community’s central act of worship, through which Christ unites the faithful to himself and to one another in his perfect sacrifice of praise.” (NDC, 128.)
- 4. Process of Preparation and Celebration of First Holy Communion**
- a. However, since full initiation into the Church occurs by stages, the R.C.I.A. provides a guide and norm for catechetical as well as liturgical practice in this regard. Therefore, all catechesis will take place within the parish community, which has the obligation to participate in the catechetical preparation of those who receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time. Parents are to be intimately involved – indeed, the primary catechists – for the children’s formation. Godparents, too, are to be invited to activity involved in the process as possible.
 - b. Parish formation programs will do well to review the relevant passages in the National Catechetical Directory: pp. 123-130.
 - c. Ideally, First Holy Communion should be celebrated during the Easter Season. If this is not possible, it may be celebrated during Ordinary Time as well.
 - d. It should also be celebrated within the context of Parish life. If for any reason it is celebrated outside of the parish, permission from the pastor must be obtained.
 - e. Reception of First Holy Communion ought to be celebrated within the context of the family. Therefore, if at all possible, the children should receive Holy Communion with his/her family.

- f. The church in the United States (currently) has been granted permission to receive Holy Communion – the Body of Christ – either on the tongue or on the palm of one’s hand. Children are to be taught both ways of receiving the Eucharist and pastors and catechist are to allow parents – with their children – to make the final decision as to which approved option they will exercise.