

First Penance before First Communion

- A. Canon 914 speaks of sacramental confession preceding the first Communion of children. “Nevertheless, canons 988 and 989, based on the discipline of the Council of Trent, require only those conscious of serious sin to confess before receiving Communion, and this also applies to children receiving first Communion. It does not seem that the intention of this canon [914] is to subrogate this long-standing discipline, but rather to suggest that the right of children to the sacrament of penance can be served best when pastors and catechists offer formation for penance appropriate to the level of the child making first Communion and provide the opportunity for penance before first Communion for those children who need or desire the sacrament. Hence, children who do not approach the sacrament of penance should not be deprived of their right to make first Holy Communion” (from The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary, commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America.)
- B. It is the policy of this Diocese, therefore, that prior to first Communion children receive that degree of catechesis which is necessary for a fruitful reception of the Sacrament of Penance.
- C. Good pastoral practice, however, demands that the pastor or catechists discuss with the parents their child’s need or desire for this sacrament prior to first Communion.
- D. No one may prevent a child who does not need or desire this sacrament prior to first Communion from receiving fist Communion.