

## Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation

The Eucharist, one of the sacraments of initiation, is the core of the church's sacramental life. Through this sacrament, *"we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body."* (CCC 1331). Every facet of the church's life has its birth in the Eucharist. Children who are brought to eat and drink at the Eucharistic table continue the process of initiation that began at their Baptism. In the Eucharistic celebration, they encounter Christ and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation the children learn that they can turn to Christ for forgiveness of sins.

### Norms

In regard to sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, a candidate must have attained the use of reason and be of catechetical age (normally seven years of age) and must meet the following requirements:

- a. Child must be baptized – baptismal certificates required
- b. Any child baptized in a Christian tradition other than Catholic must make a Profession of Faith.
- c. Must be properly instructed in each of the sacraments.
- d. The child must celebrate First Reconciliation prior to First Communion.

### Diocesan Guidelines

1. *"Children who participate with their family in the Mass experience the Eucharistic mystery in an initial way and... learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer."* (NDC 126). Children normally do not begin sacramental preparation unless there is regular attendance and participation in the Sunday Mass.
2. Parent/guardian participation sessions are an integral part of preparation for each sacrament. *"Children's preparation...begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that format the foundation for a child's understanding of the Eucharist"* (NDC 126).
3. Preparation for parent and child takes place in the family's parish.
4. Celebration of these sacraments takes place in the family's parish.
5. The child has completed at least one year of catechesis by the time of the reception of the sacrament in either a parish religious education program, Catholic school or home school program.
6. The Catholic school, religious education and home-schooled child participates in his/her parish sacramental preparation programs. *"Home schooling alone cannot replace catechesis or sacramental preparation in the parish church"* (GCD 17; NCD 32).
7. Sacramental catechesis is distinct and separate from parish religious education, Catholic school and home school programs.

**Record of First Communion:**

The names of those receiving First Communion should be recorded in the First Communion Register at the parish where the sacrament is celebrated. First Communicant's place of Baptism is to be notified so that the date of reception can be noted in the Baptismal Register.