

**FIRST EUCHARIST POLICY**

Catechesis for proximate first celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist will begin in the second half of the third year of the parish religious education program. Catechesis for First Eucharist is to be conducted separately from catechesis for First Reconciliation, and catechesis for First Reconciliation will precede catechesis for First Eucharist. Thus, children enrolled in proximate catechesis for the reception of First Eucharist are to have already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Children are to be enrolled in a catechetical program approved by the pastor for at least two years prior to proximate catechesis for First Eucharist. Adequate and meaningful catechesis must precede the first reception of Eucharist. Parents shall register their children for, or demonstrate previous participation in, a program for the celebration of the sacrament. In the case of older children desiring first reception of this sacrament, the pastor and parish director of religious education should decide upon and implement an appropriate program of study which will adequately prepare that person for the sacrament.

Parents not only have the right but also the responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Eucharist. That preparation should be both supportive and instructional. The supportive role includes a home environment which nourishes a love of God and an appreciation for the Eucharist. The instructional role is to assist in teaching and reinforcing of catechetical content. Thus, parents will be invited to participate in at least two sessions of sacramental catechesis for adults.

The significance of the Eucharist is manifested when it is celebrated with faith and devotion by children and parents in the family's own faith community. The celebration of First Eucharist is the celebration of the whole Christian community welcoming the first communicants. Therefore, the whole parish should be involved in the preparation and celebration of the sacrament.

The pastor has final responsibility for determining the readiness of a child for First Eucharist. Because pastors are usually not directly involved in the catechesis, parents in consultation with the catechists are normally the ones to decide if a child is ready for celebration of the sacrament. Every effort should be made to see that parents accept this privilege and responsibility. Interviews with parents and children are appropriate if the interview encourages a process of mutual discernment.

Normally, children will receive First Eucharist in the parish in which their parents are members. Taking into account religious education and the nature of contemporary society, pastors and parish directors can make allowances to permit a child to receive First Eucharist in another parish different from the one in which preparation has taken place.

The catechetical program to be used in the preparation for First Eucharist is to be one recommended by the Religious Education Office of the Diocese of Las Cruces.

**Ongoing Catechesis**

Since the Eucharist is the heart of the Christian life, the maturing individual can continually grow in understanding and experiencing of this sacrament. Continued catechesis on the Eucharist and reconciliation, adapted to the level of the learner, is an integral element of all graded programs of systematic catechesis.

Parents are to be reminded that the child's catechetical preparation does not end with the reception of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

Parish experiences also provide opportunities for adults, youth, parents, and the parish community to deepen their understanding of participation in the Eucharist. Since this sacrament celebrates further initiation into the Christian community, a heightened awareness in the Christian assembly as to its own special ministries of welcoming, healing, fellowship, and praise will foster an enriching experience of the Eucharist.

Other enrichment strategies might include guidelines for family activities and family-centered catechesis so that appropriate preparation for the Eucharistic Celebration can be done at home.

#### Documentation

This sacrament is to be recorded in the parochial communion registry. It is recommended that notification of the reception of this sacrament be made to the parish of baptism.