
First Eucharist Preparation Policies and Guidelines

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First Eucharist Guidelines

Interpreting This Document

This document is written in two sections. Please read the following descriptions to properly understand how to interpret each section.

Diocesan Policy

This section of the document is to be implemented in all parishes of the Diocese. The need to make individual exceptions for pastoral need could be considered.

Diocesan Preferences

This section of the document is to be considered Diocesan suggestions. These suggestions are offered to parishes to help them celebrate sacramental initiation with a greater faithfulness to the spirit of Church documents. Parishes are asked to consider these suggestions seriously.

First Eucharist Guidelines

Diocesan Policy - 620

620.00 Parishes will follow the *First Eucharist Preparation Policies and Guidelines*.

621.00 Administrative Policies

621.10 First Eucharist will be celebrated only with those who have been properly prepared (Canon 913 #1), who are actively involved in the parish preparation program, and who freely choose to receive.

621.20 Sacraments are celebrations of the believing community. The option for home-schooling during the preparation for this sacrament is discouraged except for serious pastoral need.

621.30 Children who were baptized Catholic before reaching the age of discretion will normally celebrate first Eucharist in third grade.

621.40 First Eucharist will be celebrated only with children who have previously been sacramentally reconciled.(Canon 914) (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, p. 127)

621.41 There will be a significant period of time between the celebration of first Reconciliation and first Eucharist. The catechesis for first Eucharist must be done separately from the catechesis for Reconciliation and the preparation periods for these two sacraments must not take place within the same time period nor overlap in any way. (NCD, 2005 #36, B-2, p. 135)

622.00 Parent Policies

622.10 Parishes must provide a minimum of two meetings with parents prior to the child's celebration of first Eucharist. Parent(s)/guardian(s), the primary educator(s) of their children, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for first Eucharist. This helps parent(s)/guardian(s) renew and strengthen their own faith, and enables them to serve as a positive faith example for their children.

622.11 Requirements for the first Eucharist preparation process are to be clearly communicated to parent(s)/guardian(s) in a timely manner.

623.00 Catholic School Policies

623.10 Children attending a Catholic school which is not in their home parish will prepare for and celebrate the sacraments in their home parish. Exceptions to this will be made only with the express consent of the child's pastor.

624.00 Catechist Policies

- 624.10 It is essential that a parish utilize the talents of the most gifted and highly trained catechists for preparation for this Sacrament. The first celebration of this Sacramental encounter with God through Christ is an experience of significant and special grace and deserves the parish's best effort.
- 624.20 The pastor or parochial vicar will be involved in the preparation of children and their parent(s) /guardian(s) for the celebration of first Eucharist. (Canons 528/777)

625.00 Educational/Formational content for first Eucharist

- 625.10 The preparation process must follow Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines published on 1/1/95. (available in Faith Formation Handbook - Section 500).**
- 625.11 The preparation process must respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of the individuals.
- 621.20 The child must know, in an age appropriate way, that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.
- 625.21 The child must be able to distinguish the Body and Blood of Christ from ordinary food. (Canon 913 #2)
- 625.22 The child must be able to demonstrate reverence appropriate to the situation.
- 625.30 The child must know the proper response to the minister of Eucharist when presented with either the Eucharistic bread or the Eucharistic cup.
- 625.31 The child must be aware of the laws concerning Eucharistic fast.
- 625.32 The child must be able to demonstrate the proper hand position for the reception of Eucharist.
- 625.33 The child should be taught in an age-appropriate way that "the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples." (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, page 127)
- 625.40 Children should be taught that from "first Communion on they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the People of God in the Eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters." (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, page 127)

- 625.41 The child should understand that the appropriate commitment to word and sacrament is the altering of their life so that their entire life is a response to Jesus.
- 625.42 The preparation process should be designed to “develop in children an understanding of the Father’s love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ and of the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, Page 127)
- 626.00 Liturgical guidelines for first Eucharist**
- 626.10 First Eucharist will normally be celebrated within the Easter season.
- 626.20 First Eucharist is not to be celebrated on Holy Thursday.
- 626.30 The liturgy will be kept simple in order to prevent the appearance of a “performance.”
- 626.40 The opportunity to receive both the Eucharistic Bread and Eucharistic Cup is to be provided. Education and rehearsal on receiving the Blood of Christ is important and will be provided so that receiving from the cup is a reasonable option for the child

First Eucharist Guidelines

Diocesan Preferences

1. The celebration of first Eucharist should be held at regularly scheduled Sunday liturgy(ies). This will ensure that the initiation dimension of the sacrament is more clearly visible to those who are celebrating for the first time and the community at large.
2. The community should be involved as much as possible in the preparation process. Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation and therefore should include the entire community to whatever extent is pastorally reasonable. Examples of community involvement might include ceremonies of enrollment and acceptance, special blessings, etc.
3. The celebration of first Eucharist is parish-based and includes children from both the Faith Formation program and Catholic school if there is one. Every effort should be made to bring the group together for such events as a retreat, parent/child gatherings, etc. so that the children get to know one another as the “parish First Eucharist group” before they are asked to celebrate the sacrament.
4. There should be two meetings with parents prior to the celebration of first

Eucharist.

5. Since all the sacraments are celebrations of the larger faith community, it would be appropriate to ask the parish to pray for the children preparing to make their first Eucharist. This can be done in various ways, e.g., banners with names and/or pictures of children displayed somewhere in the church, frequent bulletin announcements, etc.
6. Clothing should be kept simple. The traditional “bride’s dress,” while not to be actively discouraged, is also not to be encouraged so that the liturgy becomes secondary to dress.
7. Individual picture taking should be discouraged. Liturgical prayer must never be a show. A practical suggestion to eliminate excessive photography is to provide pictures/videos for the parent(s)/guardians at either no cost or minimal cost.

Any parish which would find it necessary, for pastoral or theological reasons, to deviate from these guidelines, will submit an alternate plan to the appropriate diocesan office (Liturgy: Office of Worship; Catechesis: Department of Faith Formation) for recommendations and final approval.

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