

First Holy Communion

1. ***Where and when should the Sacrament be celebrated?***

- 1.1. The ordinary place where a child celebrates First Eucharist is the parish of registration of the child's parents or legal guardian or the parish in whose territory the child's parents live (if unregistered). If the parents wish the child to celebrate this sacrament in another parish that does not fall into the above categories or with his or her class from the Catholic elementary school where he or she is registered, the child may do so with the parents' permission and the written consent of the pastor of the parish in which the parents/legal guardians are registered or to whose territory they belong (if unregistered).
- 1.2. The usual age for one to receive Holy Communion for the first time is about the seventh year.⁴ The Easter season is the most appropriate liturgical season for celebrations.
- 1.3. Children should have reached the use of reason and be properly disposed. They should 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" (c. 913).

2. ***What role do parents have in choosing this Sacrament for their child?***

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of parents along with pastors to see that children are prepared for and receive the Eucharist (c. 914). Parents should be involved in the decision regarding the readiness of their child for the Sacrament.
 - 2.1.1. If a child is under the care of someone other than the parent or guardian, the parent or guardian should be asked for permission.
 - 2.1.2. If the child's parents are not practicing Catholics but wish to have their child receive the sacrament, the child should not be kept from receiving the Eucharist (c. 843). Parents should be encouraged, however, to participate in the sacramental preparation process with the child, and pastoral ministers should explore other avenues to foster the Faith in the entire family.

⁴ "The age of discretion, both for Confession and for Holy Communion, is the time when a child begins to reason, that is about the seventh year, more or less. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both Confession and Communion." (Pope Pius X, *Quam Singulari*)

3. *What kind of catechesis is required?*

- 3.1. For the child, catechesis for First Eucharist should be designed
 - 3.1.1. to help the child begin to "realize deeply that its celebration is the true center of the whole Christian life" (*Eucharisticum Mysterium*, §6);
 - 3.1.2. to help the child "participate in the Mass and to receive Christ's Body and Blood in communion in an informed and reverent manner" (*NCD*, §122); and
 - 3.1.3. to strengthen the child's "awareness of the Father's love, of the call to participate in Christ's sacrifice, and of the gift of the Spirit" (*NCD*, §122).
- 3.2. Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they have a duty to participate in the preparation of their children for the Sacraments. Parishes should provide education for parents of children preparing to receive the sacrament so that parents can fulfill their role as primary teachers of their children. Parent programs should be designed to nourish the faith life of participants as well as provide them with theological understanding of the sacrament (*NCD*, §117, 119; *Rite of Baptism for Children: Introduction*, §5; cc. 851, 852).
 - 3.2.1. Godparents should be invited to join parents in parish programs of parent preparation (c. 774).

4. *How should parishes design preparation programs?*

- 4.1. In discerning their particular preparation programs, parishes shall consider the support and guidelines given by the Office of Parish Support.

5. *What should happen in the case of a child who is developmentally disabled?*

- 5.1. "The criterion for reception of Holy Communion is the same for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities as for all persons, namely, that the person be able to "distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food," even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally. Pastors are encouraged to consult with parents, those who take the place of parents, diocesan personnel involved with disability issues, psychologists, religious educators, and other experts in making their judgment. If it is determined that a parishioner who is disabled is not ready to receive the sacrament, great care is to be taken in explaining the reasons for this decision. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the Catholic to receive

the sacrament. The existence of a disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from receiving Holy Communion.”⁵

6. *What should happen in the case of a child who is older than the age at which the Sacrament is usually first received?*

- 6.1. Children who are baptized only, but who are beyond the age of reason are treated as adult candidates, with the rites and catechesis adapted to their age. (cf. c. 851, §1; OCIA, §252-330)

7. *What kind of record is kept of First Eucharist?*

- 7.1. Parishes within the Diocese of Houma Thibodaux are to enter a record of First Communion into the Sacramental Register and onto the digital platform.⁶ If First Communion is received at a parish other than the parish of Baptism, the parish where the Sacrament was received shall send a notification to the parish of Baptism.

⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, §22. <http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities.cfm>

⁶ The digital platform currently in use in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux is *ParishSOFT*.

First Confession

1. *Where and when should the Sacrament be celebrated?*

- 1.1. The ordinary place where a child celebrates First Confession is the parish of registration of the child's parents or legal guardian or the parish in whose territory the child's parents live (if unregistered). If the parents wish the child to celebrate this sacrament in another parish that does not fall into the above categories or with his or her class from the Catholic elementary school where he or she is registered, the child may do so with the parents' permission.
 - 1.1.1. The parents should, however, consult with their proper pastor and the pastor of the place where the child will make First Confession (or the one whom the pastor has delegated to care for those approaching First Confession).
 - 1.1.2. Due to the Sacramental Seal, this permission is not strictly required.
- 1.2. The usual age for one to make Sacramental Confession for the first time is about the seventh year, prior to First Holy Communion.⁷ Children should have reached the use of reason and be "properly disposed" (c. 914).

2. *What role do parents have in choosing the Sacrament for their child?*

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of parents along with pastors to see that children are prepared for and receive Reconciliation (c. 914). Parents should be involved in the decision regarding the readiness of their child for the Sacrament.
 - 2.1.1. If a child is under the care of someone other than a parent or a legal guardian, care must be taken that the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian is obtained or at least they are made aware and do not object before proceeding with sacramental preparation. If it is clear that the child's parents or legal guardian do not want the child to receive the Sacramental Confession because of personal disbelief against it or animosity towards the sacrament, and the child wants to receive the sacrament, the pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, may make his determination to give the sacrament, recognizing each baptized Catholic's right to the sacraments.
 - 2.1.2. If the child's parents are not practicing Catholics but wish to have their child receive the sacrament, the child should not be kept from receiving

⁷ "The age of discretion, both for Confession and for Holy Communion, is the time when a child begins to reason, that is about the seventh year, more or less. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both Confession and Communion." (Pope Pius X, *Quam Singulari*)

Reconciliation (c. 843). Parents should be encouraged, however, to participate in the sacramental preparation process with the child, and pastoral ministers should explore other avenues to foster the Faith in the entire family.

3. ***What kind of catechesis is required?***

- 3.1. For the child, catechesis for First Confession should be designed
 - 3.1.1. to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrongdoing, and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church;
 - 3.1.2. to enable the child to experience the expression of faith in forgiving and being forgiven, and
 - 3.1.3. to encourage the child to approach the sacrament regularly (*NCD*, §126).
- 3.2. Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they have a duty to participate in the preparation of their children for the Sacraments. Parishes should provide education for parents of children preparing to receive the sacrament so that parents can fulfill their role as primary teachers of their children. Parent programs should be designed to nourish the faith life of participants as well as provide them with theological understanding of the sacrament (*NCD*, §117, 119; *Rite of Baptism for Children: Introduction*, §5; cc. 851, 852).
 - 3.2.1. Godparents should be invited to join parents in parish programs of parent preparation (c. 774).
- 3.3. Parents, godparents, and members of the parish community at large should be encouraged to act as role models for the young penitents by renewing their own participation in the sacrament. "For it is not only as an original gift that the faithful receive *metonia* in the Church through baptism; through the sacrament of penance in the Church that same gift is restored and strengthened for those members who have sinned" (Pope St. Paul VI, *Paenitemini*).

4. ***How should parishes design programs of catechesis for Reconciliation?***

- 4.1. In discerning their particular preparation programs, parishes shall consider the support and guidelines given by the Office of Parish Support.

5. ***How should the Sacrament be celebrated?***

- 5.1. The Sacrament should be celebrated in accord with the *Rite of Penance*. This may be done by means of the *Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents* (§41-47) or by the *Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and*

Absolution (§48-59).

6. ***What should happen in the case of a child who is developmentally disabled?***

- 6.1. Whenever possible, children who are developmentally disabled should be prepared for the sacrament, and should be included in the parish sacramental celebration (*NCD*, §196).

7. ***What kind of record is kept of First Confession?***

- 7.1. Due to the Sacramental Seal, *no record* is kept of First Confession.