



Guidelines for the Reception of First Eucharist

Summation of Requirements

Office of Faith Formation 2019

Archdiocesan Requirements/Goals

It is the responsibility of the Archdiocese of San Francisco to see that in each parish program will help parents/guardians in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist. In this way they can participate readily in the catechesis of their children. This preparation is given through parent/guardian meetings, readings, online materials, retreat experiences and family catechesis. Two or more sessions, in addition to the mandated family session, for the parents are required.

Preparation requires that parishes use the approved textbooks of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. The following areas are of special importance to build into the curriculum. (From the *National Directory for Catechesis* # 36:3a) These topic areas can be an excellent resource for the parent meetings and educational materials.

- *Teaches that the Eucharist the real presence of Jesus in the bread and wine of communion, is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples.*
- *Teaches not only "the truths of faith regarding the Eucharist but also how 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. (Directory of Masses with Children, n. 12)*
- *Ensures that the baptized have been prepared, according to their capacity, for the Sacrament of Penance prior to their First Communion.*
- *Develops 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.*
- *Teaches that "the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ" and that "what appears to be bread and wine are actually His living Body". (NCD #122)*
- *Teaches the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread.*

- *Teaches the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species of bread and wine.*
- *Helps them to participate actively and consciously in the Mass. This means that the young person and family attend regularly throughout the 2 year period. This allows the family to gradually help the candidate learn to join with the assembly in prayer.*
- *Helps children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner.*

Parent/guardian Requirements

Parent/guardian engagement with the children around preparation of the sacrament requires more than seeing to the readiness of the child. Parents/guardians need to:

- Attend an initial interview with the child and parents/guardian to share the faith life of the family and readiness for preparation and one interview before the reception of the sacrament to assess readiness for the reception of the sacrament:
- Participate in a minimum of two parish meetings and receive materials regarding what the children are learning, how they can participate in the sharing of faith and how they can deepen their own understanding of the Eucharist:
- Bring children to the Saturday Vigil/Sunday Mass on a regular basis to help the children understand the importance of Eucharist in the life of the Church community:
- Participate in at least one family catechesis event provided by the parish in preparation for the sacrament:
- See that candidates for First Eucharist participate fully and regularly in the catechetical program of the parish:
- Attend with the child a parish retreat in preparation for the sacrament:
- See that their child attends practices for reception of the sacrament.

Parish Requirements

- In order to enhance the experience of accompanying the journey of faith within the candidate and the family, interviews with the family and candidate are very important. This is a time for pastoral care and encouragement in the spiritual life of the individual and the family. (If parents/guardians for whatever reason are not able to participate, then the interview should be done with the child and an adult who is assisting the child in faith development.) This should be done at the beginning the first year of preparation and once again in the 2nd year prior to reception of First Eucharist.

- Provide trained catechists who have received their Basic Catechist Certification through the California Catholic Bishops Guidelines and are up to date in that certificate.
- Provide a comprehensive program for families and their children in preparation for the sacrament through multiple avenues.
- Engage the parish community in praying for and welcoming these candidates and their families.
- Have at least one family catechesis event for children and families together to deepen their faith.
- Provide a retreat time for parents/guardians and children to deepen their understanding of the sacrament.
- Take care with divorced/separated families that all those who have custody of the children give consent to reception of the sacrament(s).
- In many parishes, students are being concurrently prepared for First Eucharist in a parish school, in a parish school of religion (faith formation program) and through home schooling. Please remember that in all cases sacramental requirements for preparation are a parish responsibility and that reception of First Eucharist is a Parish and not an individual school event. Therefore, while there will be differing classroom approaches in each of these separate educational cases, the guidelines addressing parental participation/education, catechesis, retreats and family participation at Mass and other Parish activities apply to all. As such, these requirements and events should be conducted together on a parish wide basis, not in separate units for separate academic programs. It should be emphasized that parish school children and families, school of religion children and families and home schooling children and families are all members of the same parish community and subject to the same requirements of sacramental preparation. Combined liturgies, programs and sacramental requirements are all a clear sign of the value and importance of participation in the common life of the parish together. The goal is growth in individual holiness and participation for the First Eucharist candidate and family and participation for all members of the parish community.
- Liturgy for First Communion Mass is not normally celebrated during the Lenten Season.
- It is important that all sacramental information is gathered and accurately recorded in the proper parish registry.