

## **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION AND PASTORAL CONCERNS**

### **Discerning Readiness versus Judging Worthiness**

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#### **Theological Foundation:**

Parents or catechists who prepare others for the reception of the sacraments and the ministers who administer these sacraments to others are called to *discern the readiness* of persons preparing or receiving the sacraments. We are never called to *judge the worthiness* of a person since that ministry belongs to Jesus alone on the Last Day of Judgment. Until Jesus comes again, our primary concern is the salvation of others through Jesus. Reception of sacraments is not determined by a judgment based on another's worthiness. Sacraments may not be denied, but they may be *delayed* based on the *discernment of a person's readiness*.

#### **Preparation and Celebration of Sacraments:**

##### **Baptism**

- Parents and Godparents are to be adequately prepared.
- Godparents are to be in Full Communion with the Catholic Church.
- Catechists are to discern whether Parents are ready and able to take responsibility for raising their child in the Catholic faith.
- Parents strongly urged to develop the habit as a family (including their children) of actively participating in Sunday Mass each week.
- Infants may not be wearing anything on the head during the celebration of the Baptismal Rite of water and spirit.

##### **Reconciliation**

- Parents and children are to be adequately prepared.
- Throughout the Second Grade, catechists are asked to pray a prayer of Contrition (Sorrow) at each catechetical session with the children.
- Parents strongly urged to pray a prayer of Contrition (Sorrow) together with their children as a part of their family night prayer.
- Parents also strongly urged to develop the habit as a family of actively participating in Sunday Mass each week and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least twice a year with their children (preferably during Advent and Lent).
- Catechists, the child, and the parents are to discern the child's readiness to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.
- Children are to be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving First Holy Communion.
- Parents may introduce their child to the priest-confessor, but are not to remain in the room during the Sacrament of Reconciliation of their child.
- Children need to learn to bless themselves as the priest-confessor gives them absolution during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **First Eucharist**

- **Parents and children are to be adequately prepared.**
- **Parents are strongly urged to develop the habit as a family (including their children) of actively participating in Sunday Mass each week and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least twice a year with their children (preferably during Advent and Lent).**
- **Catechists, the child, and the parents are to discern the child's readiness to receive First Holy Communion.**
- **Children are to be encouraged to receive both species, the Body and the Blood, since it is a more complete sign of the fullness of the Eucharist.**
- **Children may not wear gloves as they approach to receive their First Holy Communion.**
- **The choice of reception of Eucharist on the tongue or in the hand is to be made by the children, not the parents.**
- **Parents are to inform the pastor if their child has gluten intolerance so that special arrangements can be made.**
- **Non-Catholic Parents or Catholic Parents unable to receive Eucharist are invited to come up with their child at First Holy Communion to receive a blessing by demonstrating the sign of placing both hands over their heart.**
- **Eastern Orthodox Christians have the same privilege as Catholics in Full Communion with the Catholic Church to receive Eucharist in our church.**
- **All ministers who distribute Holy Communion or offer a simple blessing do so based on a person's readiness without judging their worthiness.**
- **Pastors are obliged to refrain from distributing Holy Communion to any person whose immoral behavior is blatantly the cause of public scandal.**

### **Confirmation**

- **Youth are to be adequately prepared.**
- **Youth are strongly urged to develop the habit of actively participating in Sunday Mass each week and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least twice a year (preferably during Advent and Lent).**
- **Religious Education Director develops a discernment process on the part of both Catechist and young person for determining readiness to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.**
- **The discernment of Catechist and young person must both agree on the readiness of the young person to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.**
- **If both the Catechist and the young person discern a lack of readiness or if just one of them discerns lack of readiness in disagreement with the other, the young person is not to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.**
- **Reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is not the parent's choice since, unlike Infant Baptism, young persons can choose for themselves.**
- **Youth who choose not to receive the sacrament of Confirmation may receive this sacrament as adults once they determine their own readiness.**