



DIOCESE OF LANSING  
MICHIGAN

## Guidelines for Sacramental Preparation

Adapted from the National Directory for Catechesis #35 & #36.

Children's preparation for first reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child's understanding of the Eucharist. Children who participate with their family in the Mass experience the Eucharistic mystery personally and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation precedes participation in the Most Holy Eucharist because it is the proper way of preparing their soul for communion with Jesus. Readiness for reception includes knowledge of sin and its effects, and understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion. (NDC pg. 135)

Parents and the parish catechetical leader, together with the pastor, are responsible for determining when children are ready to receive First Penance and Reconciliation. Pastors have the responsibility to verify that individuals are prepared for sacraments, however, they cannot require participation in parish sacramental preparation programs for children. Parents are free to complete proper preparation of their children at home. See Policy # 6141.3 REVISED, **FAITH FORMATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION and HOME-SCHOOLING PROGRAMS** attached.

The following lists are things that the child should know and be able to practice before they participate in either the sacrament of Reconciliation or Eucharist, respectively. It is not recommended that these points be received as something for the child to memorize. Rather, these lay out what is, generally necessary for a child to participate interiorly and exteriorly in the sacrament. The goal is for them to prepare their hearts and minds to commune with the Lord Jesus.

It is recommended that the parent teach the child these things through listening to Sacred Scripture together, by participation in the Mass together, and simple conversations about both. Many of the points below refer to moments that occur during the Mass. The parent may point out these moments as they occur in Mass. Once a child knows the things on these lists and can practice them attentively then they are ready to participate in the respective sacrament. Generally, this will take several years to accomplish. You should begin teaching your child parts of the Mass as early as 3 years old and gradually teach them more as they grow.

Parents may consider watching these videos on the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and the Eucharist as a summary of the meaning of the sacraments of initiation:

<https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/sketchpad>.

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation

In order to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation a child must:

- Be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
- Recognize Jesus as either friend, The Good Shepherd, God, and/or Savior
- Recognize that their unloving words and actions (sins) have offended Jesus
- Have a desire to tell Jesus they are sorry for those sins

Additionally, the child will need to complete the following *in* the sacrament of Reconciliation

- Confess those unloving words and actions to a priest who stands in the place of Jesus
- Pray a prayer of contrition
- Receive absolution from the priest
- Complete the penance the priest gives to them

### The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Teaching points

- ❖ God loves them no matter what and wants each of them to come to him
- ❖ The child is welcome to speak with God or sit in his presence any time they choose. God is always with them. This is prayer.
- ❖ Turn to Jesus and his Church for guidance and forgiveness
- ❖ Jesus gave his power to forgive sins to the apostles who have passed it on to Bishops and priests for the last 2,000 years. This is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ❖ Recognize the presence of good and evil in the world and their personal capacity for both
- ❖ There is sin which damages our friendship with God (venial sin) and there is sin which breaks that relationship (Mortal). God is the only one who can fix it once it is broken. God invites us to come to him so that he can fix it, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ❖ When a person confesses their sins in confession God forgives them completely and never thinks about those sins again
- ❖ The priest is bound to absolute secrecy regarding the sins they hear in the sacrament of Reconciliation
- ❖ Know and Practice the steps of making confession to a priest
  - Confess those unloving words and actions to a priest who stands in the place of Jesus
  - Pray a prayer of contrition
  - Receive absolution from the priest
  - Complete the penance the priest gives to them

## The Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist

### Essentials:

In order to participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist a child must:

- Be Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
- Be in a state of Grace (if they are of the age of reason they have been to the sacrament of Reconciliation recently)
- Recognize Jesus in the Eucharist
- Have a desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist

## Teaching Points\*

- ❖ Identify Jesus as either God, Savior, Friend, and/or the Good Shepherd and that it is Jesus who offers Himself to us in the Eucharist.
- ❖ Acknowledge that Jesus calls them *by name* to participate in the Eucharist.
- ❖ Acknowledge that Jesus invites us to offer ourselves to God the Father when he offers himself in the Mass.
- ❖ Demonstrate familiarity with the inside of the Church – the altar, offertory table, chalice, crucifix, baptismal font, tabernacle, etc.
- ❖ Recognize the part of Mass where God calls us to his mercy through the repentance of our sin: the penitential rite
- ❖ Recognize that God speaks to us through the Holy Bible read at Mass.
- ❖ Distinguish the difference between the Body and Blood of Christ received in Holy Communion from ordinary bread and wine brought forward during Mass
- ❖ Recognize the point in time when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. They should be familiar with the words and actions of Jesus from the Last Supper which are repeated by the Priest at Mass, i.e., “This *is* my Body which will be given up for you ... This *is* the chalice of my Blood.”
- ❖ Explain that we prepare ourselves by fasting from food and drink (except for water or medicine) for one hour before receiving Holy Communion.
- ❖ Repeat that our response to “The Body of Christ” when we receive Holy Communion is “Amen,” which means, “Yes, I believe.”
- ❖ Demonstrate how to receive both Holy Communion, either on the tongue or in the hand, and the Precious Blood in a reverent manner.
- ❖ Our posture in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist speaks what is in our hearts. We genuflect to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and kneel before him in adoration.

- ❖ Know that we bow at particular points during the Mass. We give a profound bow when Jesus is mentioned in the Nicene Creed and when we stand before him in the Eucharist.
- ❖ Tell what to do after receiving Holy Communion – specifically, return to seat in a respectful manner and spend time in prayer with Jesus, thanking Him, expressing our love for Him, and expressing needs and concerns we would like to share with Him. If the congregation is singing, they should join in.
- ❖ Understand that God calls him/her to come to Mass every Sunday to hear His Word, to receive Jesus in Holy Communion and to offer ourselves to the Heavenly Father.

Please reference The National Directory for Catechesis for more details:

#35 – Catechesis for the Sacraments in General

#36 – Catechesis for the Particular Sacraments