

EUCHARIST

THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.... Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts .” (Acts 2:42,46)

From the earliest days the community has gathered around the Eucharistic table. “Initiated into the Christian mystery by Baptism and Confirmation, Christians are fully joined to the Body of Christ in the Eucharist (National Catechetical Directory , # 120).

The Eucharist is of such importance in our lives as faithful people that the Second Vatican Council stated that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life (Lumen Gentium, 11).”

THE SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

The basic principles of the Sacramental Guidelines are:

- Sacraments are celebrations of the community.
- The celebration of Eucharist is the culmination of initiation.
- The Baptized, when suitably prepared and properly disposed, have a right to Eucharist.

- The criteria for preparation and celebration is readiness (not age or grade level).
- Parents, in dialogue with the parish staff, have the right and responsibility to determine the readiness of their own child.

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT

There are several key principles which apply to all sacramental preparation in the Diocese of Rochester.

Sacramental preparation is to be separate from the school and the religious education classroom. School or religious education sacramental preparation cannot adequately address the principles of readiness, the role of parents or the parish involvement/responsibility for sacramental preparation and celebration.

Preparation for any sacrament is a journey of the heart that prepares us to meet the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. It involves reflection, prayer, faith sharing and ritual celebration with parents and other candidates.

This is not an educational process or a time to “make up or catch up” on catechetical material. In the case of preparation for First Communion, if a child is lacking age-appropriate foundational catechesis, the appropriate process is The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for Children of Catechetical Age.

Immediate catechesis for the Sacrament of Eucharist is to be short and focused on the preparation for the celebration of the sacrament. The whole of the preparation process is to take no more than three months.

The goal of this catechesis is to help children participate in the Mass in a meaningful, reverent manner.

The content of the preparation is to have at its core the format/structure of the Eucharistic celebration. Themes should include “sharing, listening, eating, conversing, giving, thanking and celebrating (NCD, # 122).”

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

Parents are the primary educators of their child/children. In celebrating the Rite of Baptism of Infants, parents publicly commit to forming their children in the life of faith. Parents are addressed:

“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and neighbor. (RB # 39).”

“Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Communion. Catechesis aims to help parents grow in their understanding and appreciation of

the Eucharist and participate readily in the catechizing of their children (NCD #121).

Parish or school programs of religious formation assist parents in this most important responsibility but never usurp the rightful role of parents.



WHAT IS READINESS?

When speaking of the readiness of a child to celebrate a sacrament, there are three areas to address: the family, the individual and the parish community.

* The **family** is the primary place where children are formed in faith.

Does your family participate in the life of the community in the areas of worship, formation (education) and service?

Has your child received appropriate formation for his/her age?

Does your family pray together at home?

As parents are you willing to commit to the continuing formation of your child in worship, formation and service?

* The readiness of the **individual** involves the following:

Is the person baptized and does he/she have the use of reason (about the age of seven)?

Does the person express a desire to celebrate Eucharist?

Does the person participate in the worship life of the community on a regular basis?

Has the person been formed in faith in an age appropriate manner?

Is there a commitment from this person to continue formation and participation in the worship life of the community?

Can the person distinguish Eucharist from ordinary bread?

Because sacraments are community celebrations, the **parish** also has a responsibility in sacramental preparation.

Does your parish provide you (parents) with the necessary support and information to enable you to fulfill your role as primary educator of your child?

Does your parish provide opportunities for life-long faith formation?

Does the community welcome children into its life?

A complete copy of the *Sacramental Guidelines of the Diocese of Rochester* is available in each parish. If you would like to read them, please call your pastor or catechetical leader.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

FIRST COMMUNION PREPARATION

**IN THE
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER**

***The Department of Evangelization and
Catechesis***