

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:

“In asking for Baptism for your children, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising them in the faith, so that keeping God’s commandments, they may love the Lord and their neighbor as Christ has taught us. Do you understand this responsibility? “(RB #39)

“The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission to become above all the first catechists of their own children.”
(*Directory for Catechesis* 124)

Parish or school programs of religious formation assist parents with 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.

Family: *primary place of child’s formation*

- 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 child baptized and does she have the use of reason (about the age of seven)?
- Does the child express a desire to celebrate Eucharist?
- Does the child participate in the liturgy on a regular basis at the parish?
- Has the child been formed in faith in an age appropriate manner including basic knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done?
- Can the child 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 lifelong faith formation?
- Does the community welcome children into its life?

Basic themes to be taught prior to First Eucharist:

- ✠ Eucharist as the Presence of Jesus
- ✠ Eucharist as Symbol of God’s Care
- ✠ Eucharist as Meal
- ✠ Eucharist as Sacrifice
- ✠ Eucharist as a Memorial
- ✠ Eucharist as Bread Broken and Shared
- ✠ Eucharist as Celebration
- ✠ Eucharist as Belonging



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS FIRST COMMUNION PREPARATION

Office of Christian Formation
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EUCHARIST THE SOURCE 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

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

- Ongoing remote preparation is essential prior to sacramental catechesis.
- Readiness of candidates is determined through consultation with parents, catechists, pastor and candidates.

- Remote preparation is provided through the religious education program, Catholic school program and home school programs during their regular classroom instruction. All programs mentioned will utilize the same text selected by the D.R.E. and the school principal for consistency and continuity from the approved U.S.C.C.B. (United State Conference of Catholic Bishops) list. The choice of texts should then be approved by the office of Christian Formation and the Office of Education Services.
- Since full initiation is the norm for all Catholics, persons with special needs (families with unique needs, including physical, emotional and mental disabilities but not limited to these circumstances) are to be included within all formation, training and participation of sacraments.
- Parents and other role models are encouraged to act as witnesses by their regular participation in church life within the parish.
- The proper context for the celebration of the Sacraments is the parish community. A privileged time and place for the sacrament, namely confirmation and first Eucharist, is the Sunday assembly.
- Immediate preparation for the sacraments involves religious education programs, Catholic school programs and those who home school joining together for a minimum of six (6) hours, and a maximum of twelve (12) hours for each sacrament. Sacramental catechesis takes place during parental meetings and/or parent/family rituals, workshops, and/or retreat time.

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT

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 Order 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 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, #133)

A complete copy of the *Sacramental Guidelines of the Diocese of St. Augustine* is on the diocesan Website www.dosafl.com or www.dosaformation.com