

Determining Sacramental Readiness

When you brought your child to Church to have them baptized, you promised God to help them walk as a "child of the Light...and to help keep the flame of faith alive in his/her heart." With the gift of the Eucharist, the Word of God, still very important for life, is no longer enough to sustain us. What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. The Eucharist preserves, increases and renews the life of grace received at Baptism fostering our growth in the Christian life. You have walked with them on their spiritual journey and as the primary educators of the faith you are the ones who will know best if they are ready to celebrate their First Communion. The catechists are your helpers.

Adequate spiritual and catechetical formation is to be provided so that children, according to their age and capacity, have sufficient knowledge and appreciation of the sacrament they are to receive. Readiness is evidenced by the child's desire to receive the Eucharist, the ability to distinguish ordinary bread and wine from the Eucharist, an understanding of the mystery of Christ, and an ability to receive Communion with faith and devotion. It is also important that the child have a familiarity with and basic understanding of the Eucharistic Liturgy and recognize the communal nature of the sacrament. Other elements of readiness are reflected by the child's relationship with Christ, an understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist, and an appreciation of their personal involvement in the life and ministry of the Church. It is to be expected that children will respond to these aspects in a way that is appropriate to their stage of development. The reception of any sacrament may be neither forced upon or refused to those suitably prepared for it. In practice, this means that not all children may be ready for a sacrament at the same time.

Questions to begin asking and observations of my child:

My child's relationship with God

- Does my child pray?
- How does my child pray?
- When does my child pray?
- Does he or she speak about a God who loves them?
- Does my child speak freely of his/her love for God?
- Does he or she recognize the gifts that God has given to him/her?
- Does my child speak of Jesus' true presence in the Holy Eucharist?
- Does he/she express a desire to receive Holy Communion?
- Does he/she participate in the Holy Mass?
- Is he/she reverent before the Blessed Sacrament in Church?

- Does my child recognize the need for God in his/her life?

My child's relationship with his or her neighbor

- Can my child distinguish actions which are right or wrong, and which ones are accidents?
- Can he/she express the difference between right and wrong in his or her own words?
- Does he/she show true sorrow for their failure to love as the Good Shepherd asks?
- Does my child understand the interrelationship among love of God, neighbor and self?
- Do they assume personal responsibility for their acts of omission?
- Do they know that sin hurts their relationship with God?
- Do they understand that the sacrament of reconciliation is a special sign of God's forgiveness?
- Does my child understand he or she must desire to change unloving behavior, recognizing the need to ask God for help in all things?
- Does my child behave respectfully of others during Holy Mass?
- Do they participate in the Holy Mass with the entire community?