

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE  
SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES  
FOR FIRST EUCHARIST

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Pastoral leaders have previously received guidance for the preparation and celebration of First Eucharist through the document *Signs of God's Love*. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this document also contained guidelines for infant baptism, penance, and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, with adaptations for children of catechetical age. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition was approved by Cardinal Keeler in 2004, while the 1<sup>st</sup> edition and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition were issued by Archbishop Borders in 1983 and 1987, respectively.

The present guidelines for First Eucharist, fourth edition, are issued almost two decades after the third edition. This current edition reflects the Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies promulgated by Archbishop Lori in 2018, as well as the most recent catechetical documents from the Vatican and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Archdiocesan policies for Eucharist can be found online <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/104-eucharist/>

## SOURCE DOCUMENTS

The following is a list of documents consulted in preparation for these guidelines. The documents appear in reverse chronological order, from newest to oldest.

### Papal Documents – Encyclicals, Post-Synodal Exhortations, Motu Proprios

- *Antiquum Ministerium* [On Instituting the Ministry of the Catechist], Apostolic Letter/Motu Proprio, Francis, 2021.
- *Christus Vivit* [Christ Is Alive], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2019.
- *Evangelii Gaudium* [Joy of the Gospel], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2013.
- *Sacramentum Caritatis* [On the Sacrament of Charity], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Benedict XVI, 2007.
- *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* [On the Eucharist & Its Relationship to the Church], Encyclical Letter, John Paul II, 2003.
- *Codex Iuris Canonici* [Code of Canon Law], 1983  
[https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_introduction\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_introduction_en.html)
- *Catechesi Tradendae* [On Catechesis in Our Time], Apostolic Exhortation, John Paul, 1979.
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [On Evangelization in the Modern World], Apostolic Exhortation, Paul VI, 1975.
- *Acerbo Nimis* [On the Teaching of Christian Doctrine], Encyclical Letter, Pius X, 1905.

### Conciliar Documents

- *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- *Ad Gentes* [Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1964.

### Curial Documents – CC; CDF; CDWDS, PCPNE

- *Directory for Catechesis*. Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020.
- *General Directory for Catechesis*. Congregation for the Clergy, 1997.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Congregation on the Doctrine for the Faith, 1992.
- *General Catechetical Directory*. Congregation for the Clergy, 1971.
- *Rite of Confirmation*. Congregation for Divine Worship. 1971.
- *Quam singulari* [Decree on the age at which children are to be admitted to first Communion], Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, 1910.

### USCCB Documents

- *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Doctrine, 2021.
- *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*. Committee on Evangelization & Catechesis, 2012.
- *National Directory for Catechesis*. Committees on Education & Catechesis, 2005.
- *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, Tenth Anniversary. Committee on Evangelization, USCCB, [1992], 2002.

## THEOLOGICAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Specific theological and catechetical principles are the foundation for these pastoral guidelines. It is common practice to celebrate First Eucharist when children are 7 to 8 years old, generally in the second grade of elementary school. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the faith journey should not be attached to a grade level in an inflexible manner. At times, parents of children just a bit younger, perhaps age 6, maybe in the first grade, seek the sacrament of Eucharist for the children. At other times, for a variety of reasons, parents delay bringing the children for sacramental preparation. Whatever the circumstances, the theological principles that guide the preparation for First Eucharist are the same. The foundational catechetical principles are also the same; however, particular details will vary according to the age and circumstances of the candidate.

### 1. Theology of the Eucharist – What the sacrament is / What its effects are

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the Eucharist is like a font from where all graces flow and it is also the end or summit to which all of the Church's activity should be directed.<sup>1</sup> The Eucharist is the sacrament that completes Christian Initiation.<sup>2</sup> Even though, the practice of receiving Confirmation after First Eucharist is common in most of the United States dioceses; nevertheless, it is important to be mindful that the Eucharist is the summit of the Church's actions.<sup>3</sup>

The Eucharist is at the same time sacramental sacrifice, thanksgiving, memorial and presence. It is all of these, not one or the other, but truly all of these.

#### 1. a. Gift / Sacramental Sacrifice

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<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.10

“Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.”

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, no. 1322

**1322** The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.

<sup>3</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no.11

11. It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church (4\*). They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ (5\*). Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It.(6\*)

The United States Bishops have summarized the Eucharist as God’s gift to us and our response to that gift that God offers us. God has gifted us with giving us life, giving us salvation, and giving us his Spirit to guide us on the journey. God’s plan for our salvation is given to us in the Eucharist.<sup>4</sup> And yet, without recognizing the reality of sin, it is difficult to appreciate the gift of the Eucharist.<sup>5</sup> The notion of sacrifice can be easily misunderstood, and because of that, the language of sacrifice, is sometimes avoided. Nevertheless, Christ offered himself as a sacrifice, and since in the Eucharist his sacrifice is made present to us, it is important that we understand the Eucharist as sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> The gift and sacrifice of the Eucharist is the same gift and sacrifice of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. b. Thanksgiving

The Greek word *‘eucharistia’* literally means *thanksgiving*. It is not common to think of ‘thanksgiving’ as a ‘sacrifice’, but indeed, that is the case. In the Old Testament, some of the sacrifices were offered to give thanks to God.<sup>8</sup> The Church teaches us that in our response to God’s gift, we offer our own gift and sacrifice of thanksgiving. Furthermore, for us to be able to give thanks properly, our participation in the Eucharist must be full, conscious, and active.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. c. Memorial

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<sup>4</sup> *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 6

<sup>5</sup> USCCB, “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church”, no. 10

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/The%20Mystery%20of%20the%20Eucharist%20in%20the%20Life%20of%20the%20Church.pdf>

“To begin to comprehend the tremendous gift offered by Christ through his Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection, that gift which is made present to us in the Eucharist, we must first realize how truly profound is our alienation from the Source of all life as a result of sin.”

<sup>6</sup> “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church”, no. 14

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, no. 1367

**1367** The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice...*”

<sup>8</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, nos. 1359, 1350, 1361.

**1359** The Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and the Resurrection of Christ. Through Christ the Church can offer the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has made good, beautiful, and just in creation and in humanity.

**1360** The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all “thanksgiving.”

**1361** The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ: he unites the faithful to his person, to his praise, and to his intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered *through* Christ and *with* him, to be accepted *in* him.

<sup>9</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no. 14; *Code of Canon Law*, 837 §2

“The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church”, no. 31

When Christ instituted the Eucharist, at the Last Supper, he gave the command, “*do this in memory of me*” (Luke 22:19). The concept of *memorial*, as explained in Scripture, is not a simple recollection of events, but, more concretely, it is proclaiming -announcing- God’s mighty works, and making them present in the moment.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1. d. Real Eucharistic Presence**

Christ self-offering is made present in every Eucharistic celebration. In the Eucharist, the Risen Christ is present sacramentally to all gathered. Christ desires to abide with us in a personal way, renewing us every day. This is a mystery, and as such, it cannot be fully understood. However, with the gift of faith, this great mystery can be accepted. All of Christ is present, his body, his blood, his soul, and his divinity.

#### **2. Preparation for and Celebration of First Reconciliation**

Previous practices of inviting children to receive First Eucharist without prior celebration of first Reconciliation are not consistent with the instructions in Canon Law, which state that “**children who have reached the use of reason** are prepared properly and, after they have made sacramental confession...”<sup>11</sup>

#### **3. Catechesis for First Eucharist**

The catechumenate model, an ancient practice of disciple formation for the unbaptized was restored after Vatican II. This process is an integrated process that connects Scripture, catechesis, liturgical life, and missionary work.<sup>12</sup> Given the nature of the catechumenate process, the Church has instructed all dioceses to employ the catechumenate model for all catechesis.<sup>13</sup> This does not refer to duplicating every single step and rite which constitutes the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult; however, it calls for a path modeled on the process of initiation. This calls for an initial an on-going

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<sup>10</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, nos. 1363-1364

**1363** In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men (cf. *Ex* 13:3). In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.

**1364** In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ’s Passover, and it is made present the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present (cf. *Heb* 7:25-27). “As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which ‘Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed’ is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out” (*LG* 3; cf. 1 Cor 5:7)

<sup>11</sup> *Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici CIC)* 914.

<sup>12</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no.64-66; *Ad Gentes*, no.14; *Christus Dominus*, no. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no 90; *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 116; *Directory for Catechesis*, no.61, 64.

evangelization, an integrated catechesis, and a *mystagogical* (post-sacramental) catechesis.<sup>14</sup> The specific catechetical content follows in the next section.

## **ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE PASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AND ACCOMPANYING CHILDREN FOR FIRST EUCHARIST**

### **1. Age for Immediate Preparation for First Eucharist**

Children baptized as infants in the Catholic faith can be prepared to receive the Eucharist **after they have attained the age of reason**<sup>15</sup>, which is generally understood as age 7. The Code of Canon Law states that, “It is primarily the duty of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the duty of pastors, to take care that **children who have reached the use of reason** are prepared properly and, after they have made sacramental confession, are refreshed with this divine food as soon as possible...”<sup>16</sup>

### **2. Preparation for First Eucharist**

Preparation for First Eucharist should begin as soon as the child can begin to hear the Good News. Ideally, this preparation would begin in the home, not in a parish faith formation setting. Therefore, it is urgent that we prepare parents for this amazing responsibility. The family is the place where faith is first transmitted, where it is witnessed, more than being taught in a systematic manner.<sup>17</sup> In other words, preparation for First Eucharist by necessity involves formation for the family. Considering that the catechumenal model inspires all efforts in the formation of the faithful, the following are important components of preparation:

#### **a. Evangelization**

The preparation of the children begins with the parents’ introduction (or re-introduction) to the Good News. Pope Francis summarizes the content of this proclamation, known as the *kerygma* as follows: God loves us, God sent his Son to save us, Christ is alive in his Spirit.<sup>18</sup> Every effort should be made to offer parents

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<sup>14</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 64-72 and *Catechesi Tradendae*, no 37

Catechesis should integrate teaching the truths about Christ and his Church, the mysteries of faith, the liturgical life, including participation in weekly Mass, and the lived faith of a disciple.

“It is a catechesis that gives meaning to the sacraments, but at the same time it receives from the experience of the sacraments a living dimension that keeps it from remaining merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in ordinary life.” *Catechesi Tradendae*, no 37

<sup>15</sup> Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **104.1** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/104-eucharist/>

<sup>16</sup> *Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici CIC)* 914.

<sup>17</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 227-228.

<sup>18</sup> *Christus Vivit [Christ Is Alive]*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2019, nos. 111-13.3

of young families the opportunity to be evangelized, in other words, to hear the Good News and to encounter the living God in their lives. For some parents, this might be the opportunity to hear the Good News for the first time.<sup>19</sup> The witness of those who have encountered God is extremely essential.

**b. Catechesis**

The catechetical component of preparation for First Eucharist focuses on complex themes that cannot be fully explained or understood by a young audience. Nevertheless, pastors, directors of evangelization, directors of faith formation, all pastoral leaders involved with catechesis, and catechists need to be mindful that the content presented to the children of 7-8 years of age, needs to be presented in a manner that is age appropriate. Catechesis for First Eucharist will provide age and developmental-level appropriate catechesis on the Mass and the mystery of the Eucharist that helps the child and his or her family participate fully, actively and consciously. It is important to be very familiar with the framework provided in Directory of Masses for Children.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, there should be opportunities for catechesis with the parents of the young children. This will offer parents an invitation to deepen their faith.<sup>21</sup> It is essential to understand that the catechetical component is not simply a series of ‘classroom classes’. If catechesis is to be fruitful, it needs to include the parents and the formation needs to integrate with Scripture, prayer life, liturgical life, and apostolic outreach.<sup>22</sup>

The *National Directory for Catechesis* notes that catechesis for reception of the Eucharist:

- Teaches that the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples.
- Teaches not only “the truths of faith regarding the Eucharist but also how from First Communion on...they can as full members of Christ’s Body take part actively with the People of God in the Eucharist, sharing in the Lord’s table and the community of their brothers and sisters.
- Ensures the baptized have been prepared, **according to their capacity**, for the Sacrament of Penance prior to their First Communion.

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<sup>19</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 232§d

<sup>20</sup> Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **104.1.1** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/104-eucharist/>

<sup>21</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 232§d

<sup>22</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 79-89.

- Develops in children and understanding of the Father’s love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Teaches that “the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ” and that “what appear to be bread and wine are actually His living body.”
- Teaches the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread
- Teaches the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species of bread and wine
- Helps them to participate actively and consciously in the Mass
- Helps them to receive Christ’s Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner.<sup>23</sup>

**c. Opportunities for reflection and recollection**

Retreat experiences are an essential component of preparation for First Eucharist. This can take place in a variety of ways, considering the age of the children. **A time frame of 2-3 hours might be adequate; however, a particular number of hours of recollection time is not required.** What is important is to offer opportunities where the young children, and **their parents**, are able to reflect on their journey. Be mindful that the capacity to reflect varies greatly along the different age groups, genders, temperament, and previous experience.

**d. On-going catechesis after the sacrament is received**

Preparation for First Eucharist does not conclude the day of the celebration. It also needs to include on-going catechesis after the Sacrament. The role of on-going faith formation for the children and their parents is very important. Post-sacramental catechesis is as important as catechesis prior to the reception of Eucharist for the first time.

**3. Discerning Readiness**

An essential pastoral duty of those who minister to and with families of children preparing for First Eucharist is to discern the children’s readiness to receive the sacrament. This is not something that can be established simply with a test that assesses memorization of certain prayers. Although, memorization and intellectual knowledge are important, the journey of discipleship is a journey of the heart. It is essential to evaluate other aspects of formation, such as the relationship with Christ that is developing in the child. What does the child understand by prayer? How does the child describe his or her conversations with God? Does the family participate in Mass regularly?

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<sup>23</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 127-128.

It is also important to help parents discern their readiness to the commitment of on-going nurturing faith of the children. This requires careful conversations with the parents and the children.

#### **4. Preparation and responsibility of the community, in particular the parents**

The community has a key role in the preparation for First Eucharist, as well as for the other sacraments of initiation. By virtue of their own Baptism and Confirmation, the community is called to be missionary and thus be active in the making of disciples. Therefore, the pastor and pastoral leaders need to be attentive to on-going adult faith formation such that those who are fully initiated continue to deepen their faith and missionary spirit.

Parents hold a special place in the formation of their children. They are their children's first catechists. The family is the first place where children hear the Good News and the first place where they learn to live the Good News.<sup>24</sup> Parents are called "to show concern for the initiation of their children to the sacramental life both by forming and gradually increasing a spirit of faith in the children and, sometimes with the help of their instructors who are responsible for catechetical formation, by preparing them for the fruitful reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the ongoing formation of the parents is essential.

Formation sessions for parents whose children are preparing to receive Eucharist should be an essential element in the preparation process. Priority should be given to inviting active engagement in the sacramental life of the Church with particular emphasis on the centrality of the weekly participation in the Holy Mass. This formation should also include a compelling account of key moments in salvation history, the articles of faith from the Apostles' Creed, and the importance of prayer—all through the lens of evangelization.

#### **5. Scheduling Celebrations of First Eucharist Masses**

If every parish is to become a center for evangelization, then it is imperative that parish leaders consider new possibilities. Priests, deacons, and lay evangelization leaders should look for opportunities to celebrate First Eucharist Masses with the larger community rather than offer a single celebration just for the families of the first communicants.

For instance, the celebration of First Eucharist Masses could be spread out throughout the Easter season. The first communicants can be divided in smaller groups of 10-12 families. Each of these smaller groups of families could have their children receive their First Eucharist at a different Mass in each of the Easter Sundays. Instead of thinking of this approach as being an inconvenience for the larger community, we should consider this an excellent opportunity for the larger community to support the children and their

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<sup>24</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 231.

<sup>25</sup> *Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 3

families in the faith journeys, and for the community to be re-evangelized by the witness of the children receiving the Eucharist for the first time.

## APPENDIX

### CATECHETICAL MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER WITH CHILDREN WHO HAD RECEIVED THEIR FIRST COMMUNION DURING THE YEAR

*St Peter's Square      Saturday, 15 October 2005*

#### **CATECHESSES OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

1. *Andrea*

*Dear Pope, what are your memories of your First Communion day?*

I would first like to say thank you for this celebration of faith that you are offering to me, for your presence and for your joy. I greet you and thank you for the hug I have received from some of you, a hug that, of course, symbolically stand for you all.

As for the question, of course I remember my First Communion day very well. It was a lovely Sunday in March 1936, 69 years ago. It was a sunny day, the church looked very beautiful, there was music.... There were so many beautiful things that I remember. There were about 30 of us, boys and girls from my little village of no more than 500 inhabitants.

But at the heart of my joyful and beautiful memories is this one - and your spokesperson said the same thing: I understood that Jesus had entered my heart, he had actually visited me. And with Jesus, God himself was with me. And I realized that this is a gift of love that is truly worth more than all the other things that life can give.

So on that day I was really filled with great joy, because Jesus came to me and I realized that a new stage in my life was beginning, I was 9 years old, and that it was henceforth important to stay faithful to that encounter, to that communion. I promised the Lord as best I could: "I always want to stay with you", and I prayed to him, "but above all, stay with me". So I went on living my life like that; thanks be to God, the Lord has always taken me by the hand and guided me, even in difficult situations.

Thus, that day of my First Communion was the beginning of a journey made together. I hope that for all of you too, the First Communion you have received in this Year of the Eucharist will be the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Jesus, the beginning of a journey together, because in walking with Jesus we do well and life becomes good.

2. *Livia*

*Holy Father, before the day of my First Communion I went to confession. I have also been to confession on other occasions. I wanted to ask you: do I have to go to confession every time I receive Communion, even when I have committed the same sins? Because I realize that they are always the same.*

I will tell you two things. The first, of course, is that you do not always have to go to confession before you receive Communion unless you have committed such serious sins that they need to be confessed. Therefore, it is not necessary to make one's confession before every Eucharistic Communion. This is the first point. It is only necessary when you have committed a really serious sin, when you have deeply offended Jesus, so that your friendship is destroyed and you have to start again. Only in that case, when you are in a state of "mortal" sin, in other words, grave (sin), is it necessary to go to confession before Communion. This is my first point.

My second point: even if, as I said, it is not necessary to go to confession before each Communion, it is very helpful to confess with a certain regularity. It is true: our sins are always the same, but we clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen but it builds up. Something similar can be said about the soul, for me myself: if I never go to confession, my soul is neglected and in the end I am always pleased with myself and no longer understand that I must always work hard to improve, that I must make progress. And this cleansing of the soul which Jesus gives us in the Sacrament of Confession helps us to make our consciences more alert, more open, and hence, it also helps us to mature spiritually and as human persons. Therefore, two things: confession is only necessary in the case of a serious sin, but it is very helpful to confess regularly in order to foster the cleanliness and beauty of the soul and to mature day by day in life.

### 3. *Andrea*

*In preparing me for my First Communion day, my catechist told me that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. But how? I can't see him!*

No, we cannot see him, but there are many things that we do not see but they exist and are essential. For example: we do not see our reason, yet we have reason. We do not see our intelligence and we have it. In a word: we do not see our soul and yet it exists and we see its effects, because we can speak, think and make decisions, etc. Nor do we see an electric current, for example, yet we see that it exists; we see this microphone, that it is working, and we see lights. Therefore, we do not see the very deepest things, those that really sustain life and the world, but we can see and feel their effects. This is also true for electricity; we do not see the electric current but we see the light.

So it is with the Risen Lord: we do not see him with our eyes but we see that wherever Jesus is, people change, they improve. A greater capacity for peace, for reconciliation, etc., is created. Therefore, we do not see the Lord himself but we see the effects of the Lord: so we can understand that Jesus is present. And as I said, it is precisely the invisible things that are the most profound, the most important. So let us go to meet this invisible but powerful Lord who helps us to live well.

### 4. *Giulia*

*Your Holiness, everyone tells us that it is important to go to Mass on Sunday. We would gladly go to it, but often our parents do not take us because on Sundays they sleep. The parents of a friend of mine work in a shop, and we often go to the country to visit our grandparents. Could you say something to them, to make them understand that it is important to go to Mass together on Sundays?*

I would think so, of course, with great love and great respect for your parents, because they certainly have a lot to do. However, with a daughter's respect and love, you could say to them: "Dear Mommy, dear Daddy, it is so important for us all, even for you, to meet Jesus. This encounter enriches us. It is an important element in our lives. Let's find a little time together, we can find an opportunity. Perhaps there is also a possibility where Grandmom lives". In brief, I would say, with great love and respect for your parents, I would tell them: "Please understand that this is not only important for me, it is not only catechists who say it, it is important for us all. And it will be the light of Sunday for all our family".

### 5. *Alessandro*

*What good does it do for our everyday life to go to Holy Mass and receive Communion?*

It centers life. We live amid so many things. And the people who do not go to church, do not know that it is precisely Jesus they lack. But they feel that something is missing in their lives. If God is absent from my life, if Jesus is absent from my life, a guide, an essential friend is missing, even an important joy for life, the strength to grow as a man, to overcome my vices and mature as a human being.

Therefore, we cannot immediately see the effects of being with Jesus and of going to Communion. But with the passing of the weeks and years, we feel more and more keenly the absence of God, the absence

of Jesus. It is a fundamental and destructive incompleteness. I could easily speak of countries where atheism has prevailed for years: how souls are destroyed, but also the earth. In this way we can see that it is important, and I would say fundamental, to be nourished by Jesus in Communion. It is he who gives us enlightenment, offers us guidance for our lives, a guidance that we need.

6. *Anna*

*Dear Pope, can you explain to us what Jesus meant when he said to the people who were following him: "I am the bread of life?"*

First of all, perhaps we should explain clearly what bread is. Today, we have a refined cuisine, rich in very different foods, but in simpler situations bread is the basic source of nourishment; and when Jesus called himself the bread of life, the bread is, shall we say, the initial, an abbreviation that stands for all nourishment. And as we need to nourish our bodies in order to live, so we also need to nourish our spirits, our souls and our wills. As human persons, we do not only have bodies but also souls; we are thinking beings with minds and wills. We must also nourish our spirits and our souls, so that they can develop and truly attain their fulfilment.

And therefore, if Jesus says: "I am the bread of life", it means that Jesus himself is the nourishment we need for our soul, for our inner self, because the soul also needs food. And technical things do not suffice, although they are so important. We really need God's friendship, which helps us to make the right decisions. We need to mature as human beings. In other words: Jesus nourishes us so that we can truly become mature people and our lives become good.

7. *Adriano*

*Holy Father, they've told us that today we will have Eucharistic Adoration. What is it? How is it done? Can you explain it to us? Thank you.*

We will see straightaway what adoration is and how it is done, because everything has been properly prepared for it: we will say prayers, we will sing, kneel, and in this way we will be in Jesus' presence.

But of course, your question requires a deeper answer: not only how you do adoration but what adoration is. I would say: adoration is recognizing that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus shows me the way to take, and that I will live well only if I know the road that Jesus points out and follow the path he shows me.

Therefore, adoration means saying: "Jesus, I am yours. I will follow you in my life, I never want to lose this friendship, this communion with you". I could also say that adoration is essentially an embrace with Jesus in which I say to him: "I am yours, and I ask you, please stay with me always".

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER AT THE CONCLUSION OF MEETING**

Dear boys and girls, brothers and sisters, at the end of this very beautiful Meeting I can find one word only: thank you.

Thank you for this feast of faith.

Thank you for this meeting with each other and with Jesus.

And thank you, it goes without saying, to all those who made this celebration possible: to the catechists, the priests, the Sisters; to you all.

I repeat at the end the words of the beginning of every liturgy and I say to you: "Peace be with you"; that is, may the Lord be with you, may joy be with you, and thus, may life be good.

Have a good Sunday, good night and goodbye all together with the Lord. Thank you very much!

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[https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/october/documents/hf\\_ben\\_xvi\\_spe\\_20051015\\_meeting-children.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/october/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051015_meeting-children.html)

## LIST OF APPROVED RESOURCES FOR FIRST EUCHARIST PREPARATION

Please consult the USCCB list of textbooks, which are in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/catechism/conformity-review-list>

This list is updated regularly. The list as of Feb 22, 2022 appears here

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Current%20Conformity%20List.pdf>

**Sacramental Preparation Materials** [These materials are only a part of catechetical preparation and do not reflect a complete presentation of all of the elements contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that should be present in catechetical formation.]

Adventure Catechism Series: First Penance/First Communion Adventure Catechism Media S/P ©2021

Believe Celebrate Live Reconciliation (Primary) William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2017

Believe Celebrate Live Eucharist (Primary) William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2017

Believe Celebrate Live Reconciliation & Eucharist (Intermediate) William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2017

Call to Celebrate: Eucharist Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2007

Call to Celebrate: Reconciliation Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2007

Call to Celebrate: Reconciliation and Eucharist (intermediate) Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2007

Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Saint Mary's Press S/P & TM/CM©2011

Celebrate and Remember: Reconciliation Saint Mary's Press S/P & TM/CM©2011

Celebrating Our Faith: Reconciliation and Eucharist Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM ©2000

Celebrating Our Faith: Reconciliation and Eucharist (II) Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM ©2002

Encounter with Christ, Eucharist and Reconciliation Our Sunday Visitor S/P&TM//CM © 2016

Eucharist RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2003

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise (Primary) RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2006, 2015

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise (Intermediate) RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2006, 2015

Family Formation: First Communion Preparation Family Formation S/P&TM//CM © 2019

Family Formation: First Reconciliation Preparation Family Formation S/P&TM//CM © 2019

First Eucharist William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM ©2000

First Reconciliation William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM ©2000

The Gift of Eucharist RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2000

The Gift of Reconciliation RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2000

Go Seek Find: Eucharist Saint Mary's Press S/P © 2017

Go Seek Find: Reconciliation Saint Mary's Press S/P © 2017

God's Gift Eucharist (Primary) Loyola Press S/P&TM/CM ©2009, 2016

God's Gift Reconciliation (Primary) Loyola Press S/P&TM/CM ©2009, 2016

God's Gift Reconciliation and Eucharist (Intermediate) Loyola Press S/P&TM/CM © 2016

The Holy Mystery of First Communion St. Maron's Publications S/P ©2005

Jesus Brings Us Life Pauline Books and Media S/P&TM ©1996

Little Catechism on the Eucharist New Hope Publications S/P ©2009

Meet the Gentle Jesus: First Communion (for children, catechist guide, family guide) Liguori Publications P&CM ©2020

Reconciliation RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2003

Reconciliation: Pardon and Peace (primary) RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2006, 2015

Reconciliation: Pardon and Peace (intermediate) RCL Benziger S/P&TM ©2006, 2015

The Sacrament of First Holy Communion Midwest Theological Forum S/P ©2019

Signs of Grace: You are Forgiven-Preparing for First Reconciliation, Augustine Institute S/P ©2018

Signs of Grace: You are Loved-Preparing for First Holy Communion, Augustine Institute S/P ©2018

Together in Jesus – First Eucharist Pflaum Publishing Group S&TM ©2004, 2011, 2018

Together in Jesus – First Reconciliation Pflaum Publishing Group S&TM ©2004, 2011, 2018

We Believe and Celebrate First Communion William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2006

We Believe and Celebrate First Penance William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2006

\*\*\*Not on the USCCB approved list, but should be included

The Sacraments by Bishop Barron <https://www.wordonfire.org/study-programs/the>