

*Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

LUKE 24: 35



# FIRST COMMUNION

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# FIRST COMMUNION

For Children Baptized Catholic and of the age of reason (7 years and older)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Mt 19:14)

“Under the direction of legitimate ecclesial authority, solicitude for catechesis belongs to all members of the Church according to each one’s role. Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life; sponsors and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equal obligation.” (CIC, c. 774 §1 and §2)

The First Holy Communion of a child marks a highpoint in the journey of Christian initiation. Every effort must be made in catechesis to help the communicant see First Communion as the beginning of a Eucharistic life.

## II. ELIGIBILITY

- FC 1. A child who has been baptized in the Catholic faith and has reached the age of reason (normally considered to be about seven years of age), and has been properly catechized may celebrate First Communion (CIC, c. 97 §2).**
- FC 2. Children beyond the age of reason (over seven) who are candidates for full communion are to be prepared for the sacrament of Communion in accordance with the provisions of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children.**
- Those children who have been baptized in another church or ecclesial community, have reached the age of reason, and seek full communion with the Catholic Church are to be considered Candidates for full communion. They are to be initiated according to the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, 30-37, with reception into full communion (Profession of Faith) and respecting the traditional sequences of Confirmation before Communion at the same celebration.
- FC 3. The formation of un-baptized children who have reached the age of reason and are seeking Baptism in the Catholic Church shall follow the general pattern of the ordinary Catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted in the ritual. They should receive the sacraments of Baptism,**

**Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the other catechumens (see NSC, 18).**

**III. CATECHETICAL PREPARATION**

**FC 4. The pastor is to make particular provision so that:**

- **“Suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments.” (CIC, c. 777 1°)**
- **Children are properly prepared for the reception of the sacraments by means of catechetical formation given over an appropriate period of time (CIC, c. 777 §2).**
- **Children with disabilities should be included in the parish sacramental celebrations according to their capacity (see *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, General Principle, 3).**

**FC 5. Preparation and celebration of First Communion are to be parish-based. Candidates for First Communion should not to be divided between those who attend a parish school and those who take part in parish religious education (see CSD, 2.1 [B])**

**FC 6. Sacramental catechesis for first Communion is to be parish-based and directed primarily by pastoral staff especially trained for the ministry.**

**FC 7. Every parish and faith community in the Archdiocese of Seattle is to make provisions that adequate catechesis for First Communion take place. Catechetical preparation is to occur over a suitable length of time.**

**7.a. This would include:**

- *Remote* preparation with parents/legal guardians, the child and other members of the family actively participating in Sunday Eucharist and the life of their parish.
- *Proximate* catechesis begins in the first grade or the year prior to the celebration of First Communion.
- *Immediate* preparation for First Communion should include at least four to six sessions of catechetical formation directed toward this sacrament.

**7.b. Catechetical formation for Children’s First Reception of Holy Communion should follow the principles incorporated in the NDC, 36 A. 3a.**

- FC 8. Catechesis programs for First Communion shall use one of the programs/textbooks approved and recommended by the Archdiocese. (For information, contact the Office of Catholic Faith Formation)**
- FC 9. Parishes are to provide programs for parents/legal guardians so that they can fulfill their role as primary educators of their children. Programs are to be designed to nourish the faith life of the participants as well as provide them with theological understanding of the sacrament.**
- 9.a. Sessions of parents/legal guardians are to include the following topics:
- The importance of family mealtime as an opportunity to talk about the Eucharist as a shared meal;
  - The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and;
  - Ways to share Scripture stories of Jesus with their child.
- 9.b. Children and their parents/legal guardians are also expected to participate in a communal retreat at their parish with other families also preparing for their child's First Communion.
- FC 10. Parents/legal guardians who home school their children are to contact the pastor for inclusion in sacramental preparation of their children (see Parish Faith Formation Policies: FF, III, "Parental Rights and Responsibilities").**
- Children, parents/legal guardians are to be prepared for First Communion as one community, regardless of how they receive their faith formation; whether in school, parish programs, or home-schooling.
- FC 11. Catechesis is to be in keeping with the intellectual, emotional, and faith development of the individual involved.**

#### IV. PLACE OF CELEBRATION

- FC 12. The parish is the ecclesial community in which the sacrament of First Communion is celebrated.**
- FC 13. In the Archdiocese of Seattle if a child receives First Communion at a parish other than the one his/her family is registered in, they need formal permission from their pastor.**

## V. DOCUMENTATION AND PARISH REGISTERS

- FC 14. Parents/legal guardians are to provide parish staff with documentation of their child's baptism at least three months prior to their first reception of Holy Communion.**
- FC 15. Registration of the reception of First Communion is to take place in accord with the sacramental records policy of the Archdiocese of Seattle regardless of immigration or legal standing of the child or the family. Notification of the reception of First Communion must be sent to the church of baptism (see Sacramental Records Policies: SR, V, "First Communion").**