

# **General Information**

## **First Reconciliation and Eucharist**

### ***Background of First Reconciliation***

The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be traced back to John 20:21-23 where Jesus gives the Apostles the gift of forgiving sins. Jesus, our savior, healed and forgave even the worst of sinners. Up until the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Christians could only receive "Penance" once and usually just before death. After the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Christians could receive "Penance" as often as needed. In the Middle Ages another shift occurred. Christians could be reconciled immediately after confessing. Today we celebrate the "Sacrament of Reconciliation". The emphasis is on healing and being reconciled with God, ourselves, and one another. We now celebrate our personal experience of our loving and merciful God!

### ***Background of First Eucharist***

The Eucharist is the central celebration and the heart of Christian life. The Eucharist grew out of a tradition of great importance to Jesus, the Passover Meal. For the Jewish people, the Passover Meal celebrates their intimate relationship with God. God saved their ancestors from slavery. The Jewish families thank God for their many blessings. They also look forward to a relationship with God, which grows deeper every day. The meal is a sign of oneness with God and with God's people. For Christians, the Eucharistic meal echoes these same themes: we acknowledge our dependence on God, who saves us from sin. We thank God for the many gifts we receive, and we become one with God and the Church community when we share in the Eucharistic meal.

### ***Sacramental Preparation in the Parish***

At Baptism, parents are asked:

"In asking for Baptism for your child, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising him(her) in the faith, so that keeping God's commandments, he(she) may love the Lord and his(her) neighbor as Christ has taught us. Do you understand this responsibility?" Order of Baptism of Children §77

This question is a reminder of the tremendous responsibility that parents are given to raise their children in the Catholic Faith. The most wonderful gift you give your children is the gift of a life of faith in Jesus.

Parents teach by example. Make attending Mass a priority. Be forgiving and loving, a true model of our Lord. Help your children learn the difference between right and wrong. Participate in the life of the parish, go to reconciliation, and receive Communion. Explain the parts of the Mass to your children. Talk about the readings and the homily. Take an active interest in what your children learn at Youth Faith Formation by talking about the lessons at home and working on the family pages. Sacramental preparation should be a priority during the immediate preparation years.

Catechists can only build on what is taught in your home. Sacramental preparation years require additional class experiences to ensure the children are ready and understand the importance of living a sacramental life. We see a difference in children who attend Mass regularly and whose parents are actively involved in sharing their faith at home.

## PARTICIPATION IN THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST

### Canon Law with Explanations

**Can. 912** Any baptized person not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to holy communion.

**Can. 913 §1.** The administration of the Most Holy Eucharist to children requires that they **have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation** so that they understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and are able to receive the body of Christ with faith and devotion. *“Sufficient knowledge and careful preparation” is determined by the diocese and implemented in the parish. Diocesan policy requires two consecutive years of faith formation prior to being admitted to the sacrament. If this has not occurred, the reception of the sacrament may be delayed.*

**§2.** The Most Holy Eucharist, however, can be administered to children in danger of death if they can distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food and receive communion reverently.

**Can. 914** 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. It is for the pastor to exercise vigilance so that children who have not attained the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed do not approach holy communion.** *In the Diocese of Youngstown, the use (or age) of reason is children in the 2nd grade (6-7 years old). If a lack of reason or participation in sufficient preparation is found lacking, admittance to the sacrament may be delayed. “Refreshed with this divine food as soon as possible” illustrates the parents’ obligation to join with their child(ren) in celebrating the Eucharist on Sundays and other obligatory celebrations throughout the year.*

