

## Sacramental Preparation for Children

Diocesan Guidelines recommend that all children must be enrolled in formal religious education classes for two consecutive years before they may receive a sacrament. All children enrolled in formal second grade religion classes follow a specific and intensive study designed to help them receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. In order to prepare for the reception of First Penance and First Communion, a child must be enrolled in formal religious education classes for two consecutive years. Parent meetings are provided so that families may be actively involved in this preparation process.

### **First Penance/Reconciliation**

Our parish religious education program offers a full and rich catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance in our second grade classes, as well as a communal celebration for the reception of First Penance during Advent. Children in the second grade study and prepare for First Penance prior to their study/preparation for First Communion. In compliance with Diocesan Guidelines for First Penance, "Once children have reached the use of reason, they are to be given the opportunity to be prepared for and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before their first reception of Eucharist." (Canon 914) The aim of this directive is to educate them, from a tender age, to the true Christian spirit of penance and conversion, to growth in self-knowledge and self-control, to an understanding of sin, to the necessity of asking God for pardon and above all, to have confidence in a loving and merciful God.

### **First Eucharist**

The Eucharist is the central experience of our Catholic Christian life, for it is here that we encounter God under the sign of our salvation - union with the Father through participation in the life of Jesus, His Son. The Eucharistic celebration is the central focus of our parish community.

Special emphasis is given in the preparation of young children for their first encounter with the Sacrament of the Eucharist. All children enrolled in formal 2nd grade religion classes follow a specific and intensive course of study designed to help them receive the Eucharist with as full an understanding as is possible. Students receive an ongoing catechesis on the Eucharist, so that they may grow in their understanding of and reverence for this central expression of their faith.

### **Older Children**

Children who are in the third grade, or older, who have not yet received their First Penance, or First Eucharist, must be enrolled for one year in formal religious education classes. During the second year of religion classes, they will enter a special class for primary preparation for reception of First Penance and First Eucharist.

## **Children's Catechumenate**

The Christian Initiation of Children is intended for children, not baptized as infants, who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age (7 years old). These children may seek Christian initiation either at the direction of their parents or guardians, or with parental permission, on their own initiative. Such children are capable of receiving and nurturing a personal faith, but they are dependent on their parents or guardians and are still strongly influenced by their companions and their social surroundings.

This process is intended for children age 7 through 13. Children must be enrolled in religious education classes for two consecutive years. During their second year of classes, they will enter classes for their primary preparation to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist during the Easter Season.