

# Diocese of Boise First Eucharist Instruction

## For Individuals Baptized Catholic

### Introduction

The reception of First Eucharist, the first encounter with the Body and Blood of Jesus, is the beginning of a lifetime of spiritual nourishment. The Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation provide a lifetime of grace filled moments. The preparation to receive this Sacrament must be thorough, theologically sound, and age and developmentally appropriate.

The Eucharist is the most august sacrament, in which Christ himself is contained, offered and received and by which the Church constantly lives and grows. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated over the centuries, is the summit and source of all Christian life and worship. It signifies and effects the unity of the people of God and achieves the building up of the Body of Christ.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states that the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Christian life (CCC 1324). To say that the Eucharist is the source of our lives as Catholic Christians means that our spirituality begins with, or flows from, the Eucharist. And to say that Eucharist is the summit of our Christian Spirituality is to say that the Eucharist is the highpoint to which everything we do is to be directed. One of the fundamental realities of the Catholic Christian is a worshipping community that is called together to respond to God’s initiative of unconditional love and grace. In public worship, individuals gather together in community, assemble as a part of the Universal Church, the particular Diocesan Church, the Parish Church and the Domestic Church to praise God, acknowledge total dependence on God, and accept the gifts of divine life that God wishes to share in Jesus, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “It is the mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world” (CCC 1068).

Forming such a community of faith requires liturgical catechesis. “Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men” (CCC 1074, quoting John Paul II, CT 23). In turn, “liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is ‘mystagogy’) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacrament’ to the ‘mysteries’” (CCC 1075). This weaving of liturgy and catechesis unveils the content of prayers, the meaning of the signs and gestures, educates to active participation, contemplation, and silence. “It must be regarded as an ‘eminent kind of catechesis’” (CT 23, cf. SC 35 and 3; CIC 777, 1 and 2). Among the six tasks of catechesis listed in The General Directory for Catechesis is liturgical education. Communion with Jesus Christ leads to the celebration of his salvific presence in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. The Church ardently desires that all the Christian faithful be brought to that full, conscious, and active participation which is required by the very nature of the liturgy (cf. SC 14) and the dignity of the baptismal royal priesthood of the people of God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church uses various names for the Eucharist. Each name evokes certain aspects. It is called:

- Eucharist – because it is an act of thanksgiving to God.
- The Lord’s Supper – because it is connected to the supper which Jesus took with his disciples the night before he died...and it anticipates the wedding feast of the lamb in the heavenly kingdom.
- The Breaking of Bread – because Jesus used this rite when he blessed and broke the bread and gave it to his disciples at the Last Supper, signifying that all who eat this bread, his body, enter into communion with him and form one body in him.
- The Eucharistic assembly – because it is celebrated among the assembly of the faithful.
- The Holy Sacrifice – because it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.
- The Holy and Divine Liturgy or Most Blessed Sacrament – because the Church’s liturgy finds its center in the celebration of this sacrament. This is the Sacrament of sacraments.
- Holy Communion – because through this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.
- Holy Mass (Missa) – because the liturgy concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful to fulfill God’s will in their daily lives. This is a short summary of the meanings given for each name in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. For fuller understanding read (CCC 1328-1332).

The goal of these guidelines are to call the parish faith community to the fuller vision offered by this document, offer simplification and clarity in regulations, and provide valuable assistance and resources for implementation. Particular attention is paid to conversion and sacramental readiness of children and involvement of the whole family.

## Guidelines

“The Eucharist is an efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the people of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ, through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1325). As a sacrament of Christian initiation, the Eucharist stands at the heart of the Christian community’s celebration of the Paschal Mystery whereby the Church is constituted and bound in unity and charity. This communion of love dissolves boundaries and seals one’s baptismal dignity within the divine life of the Holy Trinity. Children receiving Baptism in infancy and nurtured within the domestic Church continue their sacramental journey, when at the age of discretion they are led to the table of Eucharistic communion. Preparation for participation in this central mystery of our life in Church is the “responsibility of the entire Christian community” (GDC 91)

### A. Candidates for First Communion

The candidate for First Eucharist must meet the following requirements:

- Must have prepared for and received the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation before receiving Eucharist for the first time (see CCC1457, NDC 36, B2;Canon 914).

- Must have attained the age of discretion, usually around seven years of age or above (The parents of a minor and the catechetical director, together with the pastor or pastoral coordinator, must determine the child's readiness to receive the sacrament).
- Be baptized
- Be Catholic (candidates baptized in another denomination must make a Profession of Faith)
- Be properly instructed

B. Cultural Considerations

a. Sponsors

C. Liturgical Rites

D. Documentation and Parish Registers

Catechetical preparation

A. Overview Effective sacramental preparation

1. Raises as few obstacles as possible to the reception of the sacraments. It seeks to balance the value of adequate preparation and proper disposition with the recognition of sacraments as free gifts from God.
2. Includes candidates, their families, and the larger parish community.
3. Adapts to the needs, age and circumstances of the candidates.
4. Focuses on the meaning of the sacrament, including scripture, historical development, and the sacramental rite itself.
5. Fosters discipleship and mission.
6. Promotes life-long learning and participation in the sacramental life.
7. Careful attention and sensitivity should be given to the needs of the child regarding language and cultural religious practices of the family.

B. Readiness for the celebration of the sacrament is to be judged by the following criteria

1. Desire to receive the Eucharist
2. An understanding of the Eucharist and the real body and blood of Christ, that what appears as bread and wine are actually His living body (CCC#1412-1413)
3. An awareness of the significance of participating in Sunday Eucharist (CCC# 1389)
4. An understanding of God's action of grace in their lives and of their responsibility to be in a state of grace to receive the Eucharist (CCC#1415)
- 5.

C. Role of the parent

Appendix

## A. HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

### 1. Summary from the Last Supper to 100 A.D.

- a. Jesus uses Jewish Passover meal in a new way to express New Covenant; new relationship between God and humankind.
- b. Jesus asked faith of followers during this meal that through his word, bread and wine make him present.
- c. The new Passover meal or Eucharist is celebrated primarily in homes as a meal of unity among believers.
- d. The ritual of Eucharist: 1) readings from Old Testament 2) readings from letters and gospels that later became the New Testament 3) explanation or homily about readings and teachings of Jesus 4) sharing Jesus' presence through bread and wine in context of a meal— at first an actual meal and later a stylized one

### 2. Summary from 100-600 A.D.

- a. Eucharist celebrated in homes, very simply until 313.
- b. Eucharist taken in hand and often taken home to sick or for communion during week.
- c. The Eucharist is not celebrated daily.
- d. In 313, public buildings used for the Eucharist.
- e. Prayers and rituals become more formalized rather than spontaneous.
- f. Renewal needed even by 384 when the Eucharistic celebration is changed from Greek to Latin

### 3. Summary from 600 to 1850 A.D.

- a. Style of prayer changes 1) end to period of improvisation 2) prayers compiled and formalized 3) concern over minor details in rite
- b. Gulf between clergy and people because of 1) elaboration and complication of ceremonies 2) clergy rose in social status beyond laity 3) bishops take on style of princes Eucharist 4
- c. Laity felt unworthy to receive communion, therefore, Easter Duty promulgated in 1212.

### 4. Vatican II The modern day movement for renewal was officially accepted in 1962 when the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council:

- a. Recognized the need for use of the vernacular for intelligent participation.

*b. Encouraged reception of Communion as part of each Eucharist under appearance of both with bread and wine.*

c. Urged greater use of Scripture and preaching.

d. Priest facing people to underline once again the communal aspect of the Eucharist.

e. The Prayer of the Faithful to encourage spontaneous prayer and the Kiss of Peace to express our fellowship.

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