Diocese of El Paso

**Policy Directives for Sacramental Preparation**

Guidelines for Children’s First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

**Introduction**

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”.

The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: “Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace”. How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another “seventy times seven” (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders.

 -Evangeli Gaudium

We rejoice because, for love of us, Jesus gave his life on the cross and destroyed sin. He rose again and made us adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. We are joyful because he is alive and present among us, today and always.

One of you might ask me: How can we meet Jesus? He lived a long time ago, but then he died and was laid in the tomb! It is true: Jesus carried out an immense act of love to save human beings of all times. He remained in the tomb for three days, but we know—the Apostles and many other witnesses who saw him alive have assured us—that God, his Father and ours, raised him up. Now Jesus is alive and is here with us. That is why we can encounter him today in the Eucharist. We do not see him with our physical eyes, but we do see him with the eyes of faith.

First Communion, is, above all, a celebration. We celebrate Jesus, who wants to remain always by our side. He will always be with us.

 -Pope Francis

**Program Duration and Design**

A minimum of two consecutive years of preparation is required for all Children in First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation.

The preparation program for candidates for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist will require a minimum of 28 lessons at 1 hour for each lesson over a 7-month period, and a

1. Family day of reflection per year. Additional family catechesis should be offered such as family activities, lessons, a family service project or family prayer experiences.

This minimum requirement is 28 hours of religious formation time. Some parishes will prefer to offer a longer preparation which is perfectly fine. What is stated above is the minimum requirements for Sacramento preparation.

The textbook to be used for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist Preparation must approved and on the current Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series on the USCCB website.

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/CurrentConformityList.pdf>

A parish MAY NOT create their own local texts or program without written approval from the Diocesan Office of Religious Formation.

**The Candidate**

The age of discretion both for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist is the time when a child reaches the age of reason, that is seven-years-old. A child must be in second grade to register for the first year of the two- year First Reconciliation and First Eucharist program.

**Parent meetings /Family catechesis**

Ideally, there should be a preparation process for all parents and children in a parish, in addition to the on-going catechetical formation. Parental involvement is a key component in the celebration of sacraments. It is essential that parents attend formational sessions (a minimum of two sessions during the year) to help in preparing their child. A mini-retreat for the child and parents should be offered as the families prepares for the sacraments/

**Spiritual Development**

Growth in the life of the Spirit within each disciple is essential to the faith life of a child. Consequently, First Reconciliation and First Eucharist programs must components that encourage and promote spiritual growth and understanding. These components include the Teaching children to pray and nurturing forms of prayer that connect to a child’s daily life.

Catechists must ensure to offer prayer experiences for the children that focus on the different multiple intelligences.

**Retreat /Day of Recollection**

A family mini-retreat is concentrated time away from normal activities and environment dedicated to reflection on the experience of God in our lives. A mini-retreat can help to emphasize the key teachings of the sacraments to prepare for the reception of the sacraments. This can be done 2-3 weeks before the celebration of the sacraments.

**Records**

All candidates must present baptism and first Eucharist certificates at the beginning of the process in their first year. Ideally, these documents should be presented at the time of registration.

GIVEN THE COGNITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES DEVELOPING THE MESSAGE AND THE COMMUNITY, WORSHIP, AND SERVICE COMPONENTS APPROPRIATE FOR SECOND AND THIRD GRADE, CATECHISTS SHOULD FOCUS ON TEACHING/NURTURING THE FOLLOWING UNDERSTANDINGS BEFORE RECEPTION OF **THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST RECONCILIATION:**

God gives us the freedom to make choices.

CCC #781, 1730; Compendium # 225, 228, 251; USCCA pp. 168-70

The Holy Spirit helps us to make right choices.

CCC #1433; Compendium # 140, 145, 151- 153 154,156,159; USCCA pp. 51, 52,102-109,112-117

If we are sorry, God will always forgive us when we make wrong choices.

CCC #1431, 1432; Compendium # 300, 301, 391; USCCA pp. 235-237

Sin is a break in our relationship with God.

CCC #1440, 1459; Compendium # 296, 302; USCCA pp. 236, 237

God wants us to forgive others.

CCC #1458; Compendium #296, 302; USCCA pp. 236-237

God forgives us in many ways.

CCC #1434-1438; Compendium # 300; USCCA pp. 234-235

We can say we are sorry to God with an Act of Contrition.

CCC #1451; Compendium #296, 391; USCCA pp. 242-243

The sacrament of Penance is the ordinary means of sacramental forgiveness.

CCC #1424, 1484; Compendium # 280; USCCA pp. 242-243

There are other times we ask for forgiveness such as in the Penitential Rite in the Mass.

CCC #1434; Compendium # 280; USCCA pp. 235, 236

The sacrament of Penance is a sacrament of healing and a sign of God's mercy and love.

CCC #1421, 1428; Compendium # 140, 145, 159; USCCA pp. 51, 52, 112-117, 168-170

The sacrament of Penance celebrates our conversion and God's love and forgiveness.

CCC #1423, 1428; Compendium # 300, 391; USCCA pp. 235, 236

The sacrament of Penance welcomes us back to close friendship with God and the community.

CCC #1422, 1424, 1440, 1443, 1462, 1468, 1469; Compendium # 300, 301; USCCA pp. 235-237

Reconciliation frees us from sin and gives us grace, God's own life.

CCC #1468, 1496; Compendium # 300, 301; USCCA pp. 235-237

Reconciliation is necessary for the forgiveness of mortal sin and helpful for the forgiveness of venial sin and the strengthening of virtue.

CCC #1446, 1447, 1456-1458, 1493; Compendium # 296; USCCA pp. 245-246

Jesus gave the priest the power to forgive sins in the sacrament of Penance.

CCC #1441, 1442, 1444, 1461; Compendium # 300, 301, 391; USCCA pp. 238-239

Regular confession is a way to grow in faith.

CCC #1458; Compendium # 300-302; USCCA pp. 238-239

We examine our conscience to prepare for Penance.

CCC #1454; Compendium # 300-302; USCCA pp. 238, 239

Penance is a way to make up for our sins.

CCC #1459, 1494; Compendium # 300, 302; USCCA pp. 234-240

The steps in the Rite of Reconciliation are:

Confessing our sins

Accepting a penance

Praying an Act of Contrition

Receiving absolution

Practice of penance

CCC # 1148, 1451, 1449, 1494; Compendium # 296-311; USCCA pp. 236-241

GIVEN THE COGNITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES DEVELOPING THE MESSAGE AND THE COMMUNITY, WORSHIP, AND SERVICE COMPONENTS APPROPRIATE FOR SECOND AND THIRD GRADE, CATECHISTS SHOULD FOCUS ON TEACHING/NURTURING THE FOLLOWING UNDERSTANDINGS BEFORE RECEPTION

OF

**THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST EUCHARIST:**

We bless food in our families.

CCC #1669, 1671; Compendium # 272, 276; USCCA pp. 215-216, 217 -

Jesus blessed food before He gave it to people.

CCC #1334-5; Compendium # 276; USCCA pp. 216, 217 Matthew 26: 20-30…

At the last supper, Jesus changed bread and wine into His body and blood.

CCC #1323; Compendium # 272, 275; USCCA pp. 216-217, 218

We call the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus the Eucharist. Date completed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ CCC #1328; Compendium # 273 – 276; USCCA pp. 172 – 176

The Mass is the most important prayer of the Catholic Church.

CCC #1324; Compendium # 274, 275; USCCA pp. 220-226

In celebrating the Mass, Jesus shows His care for the entire people of God.

CCC #1368; Compendium # 276, 281; USCCA pp. 225-229

The Eucharist is our celebration of unity, reconciliation, and peace.

CCC #1325-6, 1393; Compendium # 274-275; USCCA pp. 228-230

In the Liturgy of the Word, we hear the Gospel stories about Jesus.

CCC #1349; Compendium # 277, 281; USCCA pp. 217, 218

In the Scriptures, Jesus teaches us that he is the Bread of Life.

CCC #1338; Compendium # 276; USCCA pp. 215-229

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we remember and give thanks for Jesus' death and resurrection. CCC #1328-1337; Compendium # 275; USCCA pp. 215-229

At Mass, Jesus is present in the Word of God and the Eucharist.

CCC #1373; Compendium # 282; USCCA pp. 215-229

The bread and wine of the Eucharist are consecrated by the priest; through the power of the Holy Spirit, these gifts of bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Jesus.

CCC #1333, 1353, 1357, 1375; Compendium # 282; USCCA pp. 215-231

The priest repeats Jesus' words and actions in the Eucharistic prayer.

CCC #1341; Compendium # 276; USCCA pp. 215-231

The Eucharist is both meal and sacrifice.

CCC #1330, 1382; Compendium # 275; USCCA pp. 215-231

At Mass, we remember the last supper; we share the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

CCC #1323, 1329; Compendium # 274; USCCA pp. 215-231

Jesus gives Himself to us as food at every Mass.

CCC #1392; Compendium # 287; USCCA pp. 231

We should receive Communion often and worthily.

CCC #1384, 1385, 1387, 1388, 1389; Compendium # 290; USCCA pp. 224-225

Jesus is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

CCC #1374, 1378; Compendium # 283; USCCA pp. 224-231

Our Church celebrates advent, Christmas, lent, holy week, Easter and special holy days and honors Mary, the Mother of God and saints.

CCC #1163, 1171, 1172, 1173; Compendium # 277, 293; USCCA pp. 228-231

The parts of the Mass are:

• The gathering in which we come together to pray as one family.

• The readings through which we listen to God's Word.

• The presentation and preparation of the gifts in which we get ready to thank God and offer ourselves with Jesus to the Father.

• The Eucharistic Prayer in which, at the consecration the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus.

• The reception of communion in which we receive Jesus.

• The dismissal in which we are blessed to go out and help others.

CCC #1328-1337, 1348, 1350, 1355, 1397; Compendium # 277, 293 USCCA pp. 228-23