

Questions regarding the Celebration of Confirmation/First Eucharist

1. How do we prepare the liturgy for the combined sacraments of Confirmation/First Eucharist?

- Each regional parish will receive a preparation manual and a liturgy planning sheet.
- The parishes involved in the regional celebration will plan the liturgy, according to the outline in the preparation manual. How they arrange to plan this liturgy is the decision of the local pastors and the ultimate responsibility of the host pastor.

2. Is it true that each parish is to have a local celebration, or solemn Communion, for all students the following week?

- Yes. Bishop Aquila has asked that each parish that participates in a regional celebration have a local celebration the following Sunday. This allows the local community and greater numbers of family members to participate.
- While not strictly necessary, those parishes which only have their own students at the Mass may also mark the occasion in the weekend Masses in their parish.

3. How do we make sure that our children experience the regional Mass as a special occasion of their faith?

- By ensuring that their sacramental preparation has led them to an understanding of the great gifts they are receiving.
- By participating with the skills of your parish in the regional celebration in terms of music, environment, hospitality, etc.
- By encouraging them to see this as an expression of the Catholic Church on a broader scale than the local parish.

4. Is it true that 3rd grade students should be receiving Confirmation and First Eucharist together?

- Yes. The norm for the Diocese of Fargo is outlined in Bishop Aquila's August 15, 2002 pastoral letter *Send Forth Your Spirit* as reprinted below:

52. The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion (CIC 891), after the reception of Baptism and before the reception of First Eucharist. This will entail the following sequence for the sacraments:

2nd grade Preparation for and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation; children are to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation immediately preceding the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist.

3rd grade Preparation for and reception of Confirmation, followed by First Eucharist at the same Mass. The normal time for the celebration of these sacraments will be during the Easter Season of each year. A set time will be established for the various deaneries.

- 5. Why do only 3rd grade students receive these sacraments at this time?**
- The regional celebration involves the reception of two sacraments, rather than simply Confirmation. As such, the homily and prayers will speak of receiving both sacraments.
 - This is a teaching moment about the completion of initiation. The order of initiation, from the tradition of the Church, the Catechism, etc., is Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This is more fully outlined in Bishop Aquila's pastoral letter on Confirmation.
 - The homily will be geared toward 3rd grade students and their families.
- 6. Are the children to receive First Eucharist under both species?**
- Yes. This is expected for the celebration of Confirmation/First Eucharist.
 - Children are to be taught both options for receiving Holy Communion, either on the tongue or in the hand. They are to practice both options.
 - With parental permission, the children should practice receiving wine prior to their reception of the Precious Blood at Confirmation/First Eucharist.
 - Children are not to be forced to receive Holy Communion only one way.
 - The children will receive the Body of Christ from the Bishop prior to the rest of the congregation's reception of Holy Communion.
- 7. Who distributes First Eucharist to my child?**
- It is fitting that Bishop Aquila distribute First Eucharist to those students whose initiation he is completing.
- 8. Are there any issues to consider for seating?**
- Yes. The children respond best when they are all seated together in the front section. Sponsors may be seated in a separate section.
- 9. Can we take photographs?**
- Yes, photographs with Bishop Aquila are available after the Mass as a regular practice.
 - Within the celebration of Mass, the regional pastors will determine the extent to which photographs may be taken. The prior practice for Confirmation is a good rule of thumb. Photographs may be taken discretely, but they may never interfere with the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.
 - All photographs with Bishop Aquila at the regional celebrations must be arranged so that they proceed in an orderly fashion. The hosting pastor is responsible for communicating the arrangement ahead of time as part of the liturgy planning process.
- 10. May we receive Holy Communion as an immediate family with our child?**
- Yes, in the sense that you are receiving Holy Communion as a family present at the same Mass. Because of the seating of all the children together, and because of the flow of the liturgy during distribution of Communion, it will not be possible for immediate family members to be physically standing next to each child as they receive First Eucharist from the Bishop.
 - Individual grouping together to receive Eucharist as a family may be done at the local parish celebration, if that is the pastor's decision.

11. What about First Communion dresses and suits?

- It is fine to mark the occasion with First Communion dresses and suits. This is not essential to the rite of the Church, so the decision of each local pastor and/or the regional group of pastors should determine dress.

12. Our parish has celebrated enrollment in the scapular during First Eucharist in the past. Can we do that at the regional celebration?

- The liturgy for Confirmation and First Eucharist will follow the Rite of the Church without additions, so these devotional practices may be done, in harmony with principals of the liturgy, on the local parish level only.
- Presentations of Bibles, rosaries, certificates, and the like are also best done at the local parish celebration.

13. Does the student need a Confirmation name?

- The use of a saint's name as a Confirmation name is appropriate. It is also appropriate to retain one's baptismal name for the celebration of Confirmation.

14. My child's sponsor is unable to attend in person. Is there anything we can do about this?

- Another individual may be asked to serve as a proxy for your child's sponsor, if this is necessary. Please check with your pastor or Director of Religious Education for details.

15. What about older children who move into the Diocese from elsewhere, and who therefore have not yet been confirmed?

- Sufficient opportunities for older students to be confirmed have been made available at other times throughout the year. Consult with your pastor if these times are necessary.