



First Eucharist

Dear Reverend Fathers, Reverend Sisters and the Faithful of the Diocese of Calgary,

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the gift of his Body and Blood that perpetuates his sacrifice on the Cross through the ages. He entrusts to the Church the memorial of his death and resurrection in this Sacrament: a sign of unity and a bond of charity. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, it commemorates Christ's Passover and the sacrifice offered once and for all on the cross. The Eucharist makes God's saving actions in Jesus Christ ever present for every age of the Church.

Preparing children to participate fully in the Eucharist is a privilege and a very important apostolic ministry. This parish-based sacramental preparation program is intended as a support for families, catechists, Catholic schools and whole parish communities as they cooperatively lead our children to a richer understanding of sacramentality and the place of Eucharist as the very "source and summit of Christian life" (*Lumen gentium*, no. 11; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324).

+ When we invite children to the Eucharist, we invite them to receive under the sacramental signs of bread and wine, the real and loving Presence of the risen Lord who transforms our ordinary and everyday lives into an extraordinary encounter with God's saving grace and love.



+ When we invite children to the Eucharist, we invite them to participate in the Mass as a living memorial of Jesus' sacrificial love for us and his ongoing desire to be with us. Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that he might continue to abide with us and so that we might partake of the saving mystery of his passion, death and resurrection. Jesus' command to "do this in memory of me" is faithfully carried out by the Church from the very beginning to the end of time. The Eucharist is the center of the Church's life.

+ When we invite children to the Eucharist, we invite them to participate fully with the Church community in giving thanks and praise to God for all he has accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

+ When we invite children to Eucharist, we invite them to gather as members of the faith community sustained by "living bread" given "for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Together with the faith community, they are united to the Lord and become "one spirit with him" (1 Cor 6:17) in a new life which comes from the Holy Spirit and animates our Christian lives.

In union with Christ in the Eucharist, we grow in union with God in the power of the Holy Spirit. All the other sacraments are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward the presence of Christ himself who heals, restores and forgives us (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1322). In other words, the sacrament of the Eucharist is the "summary of our faith," the very "source and summit of the Christian life", which completes and repeatedly celebrates our sacramental initiation into the "Body of Christ" the Church.

His Excellency Most Reverend William T. McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary

