**Is my child ready to prepare for their**

Parents, you are the #1 influence on your child’s faith, and what you do to nurture faith at home and in your parish are vitally important. The Second Vatican Council noted the importance of the home in nurturing faith in its reference to the family as “the domestic church” or the “Church of the Home”. In essence, the family is the most basic foundation of Church.

Parents – You are #1

**First Reconciliation and First Eucharist?**

Welcome to this important time in your family’s life with Jesus Christ and His Church. This preparation time for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist marks a new chapter in your family’s faith life as Catholics. It is our hope that your child will experience the forgiveness and healing of our loving God through the sacrament of Reconciliation many times. Your child will also be able to participate fully in the worship life of your parish by receiving Jesus in the Eucharist each week. So, this preparation is not just for his/her “first” Reconciliation and Eucharist; it is preparation for a lifetime. We, at Holy Spirit, are your partner in this preparation, and we are committed to supporting you in your responsibility as Christian parents and guardians. May God bless you on this faith journey!

Sunday Eucharist is the centerpiece of life as a Catholic. Please make every effort to develop a practice of coming to Mass with your children each week, both now and after they receive their first Communion. Just as we provide our children daily with food at our table, we cannot fail to provide them weekly with food that will sustain them for life – the presence of Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament.

**Discernment for Reconciliation**

**The goal of the preparation period is to:**

• Nurture a child’s relationship to Jesus Christ as the one who loves us and showers God’s mercy upon us

• Nurture an appreciation of the sacrament of reconciliation as a way to experience God’s mercy and forgiveness

• Nurture the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of living

**These are the signs that indicate a child is ready to receive First Reconciliation:**

• A desire to receive the Sacrament

• Ability to distinguish between “mistakes” (non-intentional) and “on purpose” (intentional) actions.

• Ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and the effect of actions and omissions upon others.

• Ability to feel and express “I’m sorry”.

• Ability to make amends and change behavior.

• Knowing God as loving and forgiving through Jesus Christ

• Basic familiarity of stories of forgiveness from Scripture and the prayers and gestures of the Rite of Penance Parents have an important role in helping a child become “ready”.

Use the “teachable moments” in your family’s life to reinforce forgiveness and reconciliation. When arguments and conflicts occur in your home, model and encourage taking responsibility, expressing sorrow and making amends.

Practice forgiveness in your home and avoid re-hashing old arguments; let go of grudges.

Celebrate the “making up” after a family quarrel.

“Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in practice of the faith…” (Rite of Baptism)

**The Christian family is a communion of persons**, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2205)

The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society (CCC, 2207).

Reinforce the stories of Jesus forgiving others.

Thank God each day for his abundant mercy when we fall short.

Teach children responsibility for others – love takes the form of action.

Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, at least once a year during Lent.

**Discernment for Eucharist**

**The goal of the preparation period is to**:

• nurture a child’s/family’s understanding of God’s love for them and their response of thanksgiving

• nurture a child’s/family’s relationship to Jesus Christ in prayer and worship,

• enhance a child’s/family’s appreciation and active participation in the Mass

• develop a child’s/family’s sense of belonging to a community of disciples who love as Jesus loves

**These are the signs that indicate a child is ready to receive First Eucharist:**

• A desire to receive the Eucharist

• A developing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church

• A familiarity with the movements, prayers, gestures of the Mass and their connection to life

• A sense of “real presence” – that the bread of Eucharist is not ordinary bread, but Jesus coming to us in a special way Parents have an important role in helping children become “ready”:

If they see you regularly receive the Eucharist with reverence, and see that it is an important part of your life, they will also desire Eucharist, and know this is Jesus coming to us in a special, tangible way.

If you have conversations about God, encourage the family to pray, worship and also meet Jesus through life with others in the parish, they will naturally grow in relationship to Jesus Christ and the Church

If you take the time to help them participate in Mass – to give thanks and praise, to learn the words, gestures, to sing and pray, they will be as comfortable at the Eucharistic meal as they are at their family’s table.

If you “practice what you pray” by living the gospel mandate to “love one another”, they will see that the Eucharist nourishes your life every day of the week.

Adapted from the Office of Lay Ministry Formation

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany