



Office of the Bishop

## Directive for Celebration of Mass for Catholics completing the Sacraments of Initiation

Recalling Pope Benedict XVI's words in *SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS* POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION of February 22, 2007:

### I. The Eucharist and Christian initiation

#### *The Eucharist, the fullness of Christian initiation*

17. If the Eucharist is truly the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, it follows that the process of Christian initiation must constantly be directed to the reception of this sacrament. As the Synod Fathers said, we need to ask ourselves whether in our Christian communities the close link between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist is sufficiently recognized (46). It must never be forgotten that our reception of Baptism and Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist. Accordingly, our pastoral practice should reflect a more unitary understanding of the process of Christian initiation. The sacrament of Baptism, by which we were conformed to Christ,(47) incorporated in the Church and made children of God, is the portal to all the sacraments. It makes us part of the one Body of Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 12:13), a priestly people. Still, it is our participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice which perfects within us the gifts given to us at Baptism. The gifts of the Spirit are given for the building up of Christ's Body (*1 Cor* 12) and for ever greater witness to the Gospel in the world (48). The Holy Eucharist, then, brings Christian initiation to completion and represents the centre and goal of all sacramental life (49).

(46) Cf. *Propositio* 13.

(47) Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

(48) Cf. *ibid.*, 11; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 9, 13.

(49) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenaе* (24 February 1980), 7; AAS 72 (1980), 124-127; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

In the Diocese of Tyler, the following is to be observed in celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist for those baptized as Catholics.

- 1) In order to emphasize the Eucharist as completing Christian Initiation, in the Diocese of Tyler those baptized as Catholics who have reached the age of reason are to be properly prepared to celebrate Confirmation at the same liturgy in which they will receive Holy Communion for the first time.
- 2) Prior to Confirmation and reception of Holy Communion for the first time, they shall celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a month for at least 10 months.
- 3) Parishes are to offer assistance to the parents/guardians of minors in the proximate formation for the sacraments, using the handbooks for these sacraments for the Diocese of Tyler.

Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J., Bishop of Tyler

- 4) Candidates for the sacraments are also to undergo two years of systematic catechesis based upon the 16 goals. Such catechesis may be offered by the Catholic school, the parish Faith Formation program, or by parents/guardian directly.
- 5) After the celebration of the sacraments, there should be a period of mystegogy, or post sacramental catechesis during which there is some conscious reflection upon the Mysteries celebrated.
- 6) It is important that a Catholic who is Confirmed at a Mass participate in reception of Holy Communion at that Mass. This clarifies that Confirmation is theologically related to the Eucharist. At the point that one is capable of worthily receiving Holy Communion, they are certainly capable of the formation for Confirmation.
- 7) As people assemble for the Mass, the candidates for Confirmation should be seated with the other members of their household, with their sponsors. By their Baptism they properly are part of the family of God gathered for the Liturgy.
- 8) In accord with the ritual of the Church, the Sponsor will accompany the candidate for Confirmation forward for the anointing at the appropriate time. They will then return to the pew and join with their families and with the rest of the community in participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- 9) At the time for reception of Holy Communion, those Confirmed at the Mass are to join in the procession for Communion with their families as part of the community of faith. Preferably, those families will take the first places in the Communion procession. There is no need to distinguish those receiving the Eucharist for the first time from the rest of the community. If there is a desire to have the families with those beginning to share in reception of the Eucharist, those families should be seated to facilitate their being the first in forming the Communion procession.
- 10) Candidates for Confirmation may wear white as a reminder of their Baptism, particularly if they will be receiving Holy Communion for the first time. The use of ties, veils, and even colors of clothes is to be left to the family to decide. Nothing should be done to make the candidates for the Sacraments seem to be a class or a group, the focus is on their relationship in the family and in the community.
- 11) The time of administration of the Sacraments is a very sacred time. Just as we refrain from taking photographs during the Consecration at Mass, it seems preferable in our diocese to refrain from pictures at the time of the anointing for Confirmation, and the actual reception of Holy Communion.
- 12) For keepsake pictures we wish to encourage a return to the traditional "First Communion" picture of the young person kneeling on at a *prei deux*, or equally fitting of the person standing in front of a devotional statue or stained glass window.
- 13) The Bishop is willing to sit after the Mass for photos with those households that desire a picture. (Please be considerate of both the Bishop's and the peoples' time and arrange beforehand so that this can be done in a timely fashion.)
- 14) Since many people in the community of faith are not able to be present when the candidates complete the Sacraments of Initiation, some recognition of the candidates could be appropriate in the community. This might be the candidates wearing their special clothes for Mass the following week and their families could sit in reserved seating. They could even enter in the entrance procession at this Mass.

Issued by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission with the approval of Bishop Alvaro Corrada this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2010.