

Admission of Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Theology

There are three elements consistently present in the New Testament where the language of baptism occurs:

- The gracious act of God through the Spirit.
- The act of the Church in outward sacramental sign.
- The response of the individual in repentance and faith.

Through baptism thus understood we become members of the body of Christ, and are immersed in the whole activity of God. (We die and rise with Christ and are recipients of God's grace through the life-giving power of the Spirit).

Pastoral Implications

All baptised people (especially children) are potentially communicant members of the church. It is the responsibility of the whole church to nurture all its members. It has been the tradition of our church to expect of those receiving Communion the capacity for faith and repentance. It is therefore necessary for diocesan guidelines to be consistent with the General Synod Canon of 1985. The pattern in this diocese has been to admit children, following appropriate instruction, at about the age of 7.

The Decision

The decision to receive Communion should be made by the child with the approval of parents and/or other appropriate sponsors. However, it is the responsibility of the clergy to continually remind the whole congregation of this opportunity.

The Preparation

The preparation should involve the child with as many members of the family as possible. It could be conducted in the child's home or with a group of other candidates. Sensitivity of professional standards guidelines needs to be observed.

There are a number of suitable preparation resource books.

Liturgy

The admission should occur at the normal Sunday service of Holy Communion. Prior to the Greeting of Peace is an ideal time. The child (children) should come to the chancel step with their family and sponsors. They may present 'their story' through a banner or other material. They might re-light their baptism candle and leave it burning on the altar for the rest of the service. (They could collect it at the conclusion of the service and carry it out in the procession.)

They could have a special role of participation in the Greeting of Peace with the congregation. A suitable prayer could be said. These and other expressions of welcome and affirmation should be kept as informal as possible. Try to express that which is right for this child at this time in this congregation.

A certificate indicating communicant status should be issued.

Records

Records of admission should be kept in the manner of confirmation records and forwarded to the diocese annually. If notice is given to the Bishop at the time of admission, a letter of encouragement will be sent by him to the child.