



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA POLICY FOR PLACE OF THE CELEBRATION OF FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The parish, under the leadership of the pastor, is the PROPER place for the faithful to hear the Word of God, celebrate the Sacraments and provide service to one another throughout the course of their Christian lives.¹ “The pastor is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful² at all times and most particularly on Sunday.³ This principle underscores this policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

POLICY

The Parish Church is the proper place for the celebration of First Penance and First Holy Communion in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Therefore, Candidates for First Penance and First Holy Communion are to receive these sacraments in their own parish.

This policy includes but is not limited to candidates who attend:

- A parish, regional, consolidated, neighboring or independent mission Catholic school,
- A parish religious education program (which includes parishioners who have been granted permission for home based catechesis,
- A neighboring religious education program.

The pastors of parishes with merged schools, along with the school principal and the parishes’ Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education, are responsible for coordinating the times and places of the celebration of these first Sacraments, working closely together on all the matters involved in the preparations and celebrations. Together, they need to agree on the grades/levels of the children receiving the sacrament, and the catechetical programs and parent formations meetings for First Penance and First Holy Communion candidates in the school and/or religious education programs. Most importantly, they need to pick the dates in each location that are relatively close to each other but at different enough times to allow personnel from the merged school participate in all celebrations involving their students.

¹ *Code of Canon Law* 515§1; 519; 528§1 and 2.


² *Ibid.*, 528§1.

³ *Ibid.*, 528§2.

If there is a compelling reason to consider an exception to this policy, then the following procedure is to be followed. Enrollment in a school or religious education program other than that of the (home) parish does not qualify as a compelling reason.

- The parents or guardians are to present in writing to their pastor the reason for requesting an exception to this policy for their child. This request should include where and when it is proposed that the child receive the Sacrament(s) in question.
- That pastor, after giving serious consideration to the request, responds to the parents or guardians.
- If permission is granted for this exception, then the pastor of the home parish must express his permission in writing to the pastor where First Penance and/or First Holy Communion is to be celebrated. This letter of permission should assure that the child is adequately prepared for the reception of the Sacrament(s).
- Upon the reception of the Sacrament(s), notification of this fact is to be sent to the home parish of the child.

N.B., Private Catholic Schools have had permission for the practice of celebrating First Penance and First Holy Communion within the chapel or another appropriate place in the school, and for the time being that permission will continue with the understanding that the exception of private schools from this policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. However, in light of Archdiocesan policy concerning the celebration of First Sacraments for students in merged regional parish schools, the administrators of private Catholic Schools are encouraged to consider giving their students the option to receive First Sacraments with the children of their home parish.

APPROVED: 
Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, OFM, Cap.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

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