
POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE PLACE OF CELEBRATION OF FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

[Promulgated: August 14, 2006]

The parish, under the leadership of the pastor, is the door for the faithful to participate in the ordinary Christian community. Here the Christian faith is first received, expressed and nourished. The Eucharist is at the heart of the parish's life. As the Scriptures are proclaimed and the Creed professed, the truths of the faith shape ever more profoundly the faith of the People of God. Through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, they come to know the Paschal Mystery more intimately and experientially. They receive not simply the knowledge of God, but they come to know the living God. Then, from the parish the faithful are sent on their apostolic mission in the world.

The following Guidelines regarding the place of celebration of First Penance and First Holy Communion are to be observed:

- I. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, it is strongly encouraged that First Holy Communion be conducted in a solemn liturgy.
- II. First Penance and First Holy Communion are ordinarily to be received in one's own parish church. Children attending a consolidated school, regional school, a neighboring parish school or religious education program, therefore, should receive their First Penance and First Holy Communion in their own parish church rather than in the church of the host parish that is providing the school facility for their Catholic education.
- III. When a request comes from the parents or guardians of a child to allow their child to receive First Penance or First Holy Communion at a neighboring parish, the pastor is asked, before making a decision, to take seriously this request considering any legitimate sensitivities that may exist.
- IV. When exceptions exist for the celebration of First Penance and First Holy Communion to take place outside the child's parish church, the following procedures are to be followed:
 - A. The parents or guardians who wish to have their child receive First Penance and First Holy Communion in another parish are to obtain permission from the pastor of their own parish.
 - B. The pastor, in whose parish these sacraments will be celebrated, must give permission and be in agreement that the child has been adequately prepared for the reception of those sacraments.

- C. After the child has received these sacraments, notification is to be sent to the home parish of the child concerning the reception of these sacraments.
 - D. It is recommended that, if children attend a neighboring parish school and received First Holy Communion in the neighboring parish church, the pastor of the children's own parish should designate a Sunday Mass shortly thereafter to acknowledge solemnly their reception of First Holy Communion.
- V. Private Catholic Schools which have had a long-standing tradition of celebrating First Penance and First Holy Communion may continue to follow this practice. However, the above guidelines are to be observed. The location chosen should be a chapel or an appropriate place which ensures the sacredness of the event.