



SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION GENERAL INTRODUCTION Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

The sacraments of initiation comprise the individual sacraments known as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. These three sacraments, taken together, constitute full initiation into the Catholic Community. Therefore, any catechesis or celebration of Confirmation and/or First Eucharist must place these three sacraments in relationship to one another. In the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist are celebrated together, at about the age of discretion, as the completion of the sacraments of initiation.

One may not receive any sacrament without first being baptized. Then one is sealed with the gifts of the Spirit and further prepared to increase in the life of charity and to participate fruitfully in the central mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the center and heart of Catholic life. The liturgy is described by Vatican II as the “summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, # 10, quoted in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*, general editor, Austin Flannery, OP, 1996, p. 122). The other sacraments of initiation prepare one to enter fully into the life of the church by inclusion at the “Table of the Lord”.

Celebrating fully the Eucharistic Mystery means being able to come to the table and to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. All that belongs to Christian life leads to the Eucharistic celebration (Mass) and flows from it. Therefore, the preparation for first reception of holy communion during the Eucharistic celebration takes place gradually over many months, even years, as children witness the faith of their parents or guardians participating at Sunday Mass and thus develop a hunger and desire to also be able to partake of this “heavenly food”. They learn that it is central to the life of the community and is the one sacrament of initiation which may be received over and over again as they enter ever more deeply into the faith life of the community.

The following sections will deal with the sacraments of initiation:

- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- Christian Initiation of Children of Catechetical Age
- Baptism of Infants and Very Young Children
- Completion of the Sacraments of Initiation
- Confirmation in Special Situations

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