

# **Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation**

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## **Introduction**

This document states the policy and guidelines of St. Mary the Virgin on the admission of baptized children to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

Some questions and answers are provided to assist with the implementation of the policy and guidelines.

## **Context**

Archbishop Sentamu has given permission under the *Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion Regulations for 2006* for parishes within York diocese, who wish to do so, to admit baptized children to Communion before Confirmation subject to his approval.

The clergy, PCC and congregation of St. Mary the Virgin fully supports the view that baptism is the universal sign of complete initiation into the life of the Church, and it is the desire of St. Mary the Virgin for all eligible children of the parish to take Communion.

## **Approvals**

1. The policy and guidelines below have been approved by the PCC of St. Mary the Virgin on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008.
2. The policy and guidelines have been approved by Bishop Martin on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

## **Policy**

### **Eligibility for admission to Communion**

Any child who is baptised, and freely wishes to receive Communion, and regularly, more than 6 times per annum, attends one or more of the church services. This would include children's ministry such as Sunday School and The Fridge. The child would not normally be less than 3 years old.

### **Parental permission**

- The permission of the parents or legal guardians for the child to receive Communion is given in writing. A form will be provided.
- Where the parents or legal guardians decide not to allow their child to take Communion then they should inform the clergy as soon as possible. Parents or legal guardians will be offered the option to discuss their decision with a member of the clergy.

### **Preparation**

- Preparation is the responsibility of the clergy.
- Any member of the Clergy, Children's workers, Youth workers and other approved persons can carry out the preparation.
- Parents or legal guardians of the child are encouraged to participate in the child's preparation.
- Parents or legal guardians would be invited to an open session to discuss the preparation of their child and the timetable for admission to Communion.
- Format of the preparation, materials and instruction to be approved by the clergy, Children's workers and Youth workers of St. Mary the Virgin.
- A review of the format of the preparation, materials and instruction will be carried out before each commencement of child preparation to ensure it is appropriate for their need.

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### **First Communion**

- A few key events in the church calendar will be used to mark the admission of children to first Communion, e.g. Easter, Pentecost.
- First Communion will be a celebratory service where the parents or legal guardians and the entire congregation would be invited.
- At their first Communion a certificate of admission will be offered to the child to mark their admission and for the child to keep.

### **Registration**

- In accordance with Diocesan guidelines a register of all children admitted to Holy Communion will be maintained.
- The register will be maintained by the clergy of St. Mary the Virgin.

### **Policy review**

- This policy will be reviewed annually by a group appointed by the PCC.
- Any changes to this policy will be agreed by the PCC and notified to Suffragan Bishop.

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### **Questions and Answers**

**Q1.** If an unbaptized child wishes to take Communion can they start to be prepared before they are baptized?

**A1.** This would be at the discretion of the clergy. Baptism of the child must take place before first Communion, ideally before completion of the preparation.

**Q2.** What would be covered in the preparation of a child?

**A2.** Contents might include:

- Life's journey and the journey of faith
- Links with Baptism
- Identity and belonging
- The structure of the Eucharist/Holy Communion
- The varied facets of the sacrament
- The Bible
- Living the Christian life
- Confirmation

**Q3.** What provision is there to cater for children with special needs or learning difficulties?

**A3.** Appropriate preparation will be discussed with parents or the legal guardian.

**Q4.** What would the register contain?

**A4.** Child's name, date and place of birth, date and place of baptism, date of admission to Holy Communion.

**Q5.** Does the child have to wear white during first Communion?

**A5.** This is not necessary. Rather we would encourage parents and legal guardians to discuss with the child what they would like to wear.

**Q6.** How does admission to first Communion fit with the approach of St. Mary the Virgin to baptism?

**A6.** Baptism is a requirement of admission to Communion. The clergy visit the family to discuss the baptism, and materials are offered to the family. Note that no demands are placed upon parents or legal guardians of the child to take any formal instruction. Preparation of the child for baptism is at the discretion of the clergy.

**Q7.** How does admission to first Communion fit with the approach of St. Mary the Virgin to Confirmation?

**A7.** St. Mary the Virgin believes that Confirmation is still important in the ongoing nurture of an individual. But it is now a mature commitment to a Christian life entered into as a conscious act by the individual.

**Q8.** Sunday School and the normal service of Communion – where to separate and rejoin the children with the congregation?

**A8.** Children normally leave for Sunday School during the first hymn and return just before Communion. The Sunday School leader is empowered by the clergy to say a 'sorry' prayer together with the children before they rejoin the congregation.