**To: Leaders responsible for First Communion Preparation and Celebrations**

As you are probably aware, Archbishop Listecki has directed that First Communions are to be postponed until the health crisis has passed. At that time, instructions will be provided for scheduling. This applies to all First Communion celebrations for the season, whether scheduled for April or May.

1) **Communication** – Please inform the parents of the first communicants. Invite them to share this news with their children. A sample letter and helpful “talking points” for parents are included in this communication.

2) **Continuing Preparation for First Communion** – Given the timing of this announcement, parishes may be at various stages in their preparation programs. Under these circumstances, it may not be possible to recreate the preparation process you had planned for your first communicants. It is perfectly acceptable to adjust the remainder of the preparation. If your program was interrupted by cancellation of classes or parent sessions or a retreat, you can assess the situation and determine how to provide resources or activities for parents to continue preparing their children at home.

It is NOT necessary to provide every lesson, chapter, or activity you had once planned. It may be more fruitful to offer family-friendly ways for parents to weave faith conversations, prayer, and learning into their new family routines. This may include a combination of video or online resources along with simple suggestions they can do together. For example:

* Suggest one thing each week for a family to pray, experience or discuss.
* Share a simple recipe for baking bread, or unleavened bread, at home. The bread can be shared as a family with a meal and a special prayer or with a reading of the Last Supper.
* Recommend watching Mass together on TV or online. This is not a substitute for Mass. But when parents cannot take their children to Mass, a televised or streamed liturgy offers an opportunity for kids and parents to pray and to talk about the Mass. Offer suggestions on what parents can point out in Mass, or provide a question to discuss.
* Introduce the idea of Spiritual Communion (see below).
* Involve parishioners in praying for the first communicants. They may feel a special urgency under these conditions.
* If you normally tour the church, offer a printed self-tour or “scavenger hunt” of your parish church that a family can do on their own when the church is open.
* Check out these [free digital resources](https://www.archmil.org/Catechesis/coronavirus-resources.htm)

3) **When it is time to reschedule First Communion,** your parish will receive instructions. At that time, you should also schedule a rehearsal and re-gathering of the first communicants and their parents. That time may provide an opportunity to include some portion of what you had originally planned to do at a preparation meeting or retreat day. For example, you may include a renewal of Baptismal promises, or offer bread and wine tasting, or review a special song, or practice how to properly receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It will certainly involve both prayer and practical information about the First Communion Mass(es).

Below is a sample letter to parents which you can adapt for your situation, adding specific information or editing the message.

Free resources that may be helpful at this time can be found on our [Catechetical Resources During the Pandemic](https://www.archmil.org/Catechesis/coronavirus-resources.htm) page.

**Sample Letter to Parents of First Communicants**

Dear Parents of First Communicants,

Due to the current coronavirus outbreak, our First Communion celebration(s) will be postponed to a later date. Archbishop Listecki has determined that all First Communion and Confirmation celebrations in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will be postponed until this health crisis has passed.

We know what a disappointment it is to have your child’s First Communion delayed. But as parents and as a faith community, you know that our highest priority is to keep our children safe. This is an opportunity to talk with your child about how important the sacraments are to your family as well as our parish community, and what a joyful and important day it will be when your child joins you at the table of the Lord.

It might be helpful to consider these ideas when talking with your children:

1. Children at this age will pick up on your emotional state and take their cues from you. When you share this news, it will be helpful if you clearly state that the celebration of their First Communion will be a little later than planned to keep you and everyone in your faith family safe and healthy. Keeping your tone positive will not only help your child with this issue but also encourage them to be mindful of the virtue of hope when they experience other disappointments in life.
2. Remember that a child’s sense of time and schedules are not as developed as that of an adult. The exact date of First Communion is probably only a vague concept to your child. Using words like “postponed,” “little later date” or “at a later time” should be sufficient for him or her to understand the situation without being unduly upset.
3. Remind your child that he or she will have a First Communion and it will be special and wonderful. On that day, when people will be more able to travel, your child’s friends and relatives will be able to share in the happy celebration.

In the meantime, although we cannot meet in person for Mass or classes, it is still important to keep the Eucharist in the mind and heart of your child and your whole family. We will support you by providing simple resources/activities/suggestions to help you continue to prepare your child at home.

During this time when we cannot attend Mass, we can make a "spiritual communion." This is a practice of desiring union with Jesus in the Eucharist when one cannot receive holy Communion. Here is a short prayer, called an Act of Spiritual Communion, that you can pray with your child or your whole family, that expresses this desire for Jesus.

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,

come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

When this health crisis has passed and we are able to re-schedule First Communion, we will inform you. We will plan a Family Gathering and Rehearsal for all first communicants and their parents/guardians on a date before First Communion Mass(es).

Let us continue to pray for one another, for our children, and for all who are suffering because of the pandemic.

Our hope is in Christ,