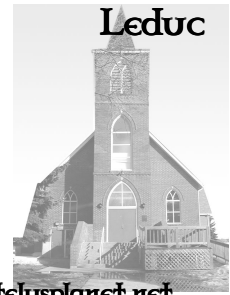




St. Michael's Parish Leduc



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Dear Parents in Our St. Michael's Parish Family,

Our team here at St. Mike's wishes to clear up some confusion that may have arisen regarding the order and ages that the Sacraments are to be received.

This confusion stems from the Church's teachings and directives, that a child's First Reconciliation should take place BEFORE their First Eucharist. This may seem to contradict the statements of the previous letter.

The letter states correctly that First Eucharist should be received by children in Grade 2 OR OLDER. Children younger than this age are generally not old enough to understand the idea of Jesus' true presence in the species of bread and wine.

It also correctly states that First Reconciliation is normally received by children in Grade 3 OR OLDER. Children MUST be of the *age of reason* before making their first confession; that is, they should understand guilt and sin and the difference between right and wrong. Otherwise, the effectiveness and *validity* of the sacrament may come into question. It is also imperative that children not be taught notions of guilt before they are able to realize that such guilt is a consequence of their sins. If a child is taught to feel guilt *too early*, it can cause damage to the psychological development of his/her conscience – the child can see guilt and love as random and unpredictable, and grow up constantly afraid that love can be withdrawn at any moment.

Now we recognize that there are exceptions to these rules – that sometimes children in Grade 2 are capable of understanding notions of sin and guilt – however these exceptions are very rare, and should only be considered with caution.

We recognize that only the parent can best determine when their child is ready to receive these Sacraments. However, we at St. Mike's affirm the church's teaching, that parents should not prepare their children for first Eucharist until AFTER they have had their first Reconciliation. This may result in delaying your child's first Eucharist until AFTER they are old enough to effectively celebrate their first Reconciliation. In other words, even though they may be developmentally ready for first Eucharist in grade 2, parents may need to delay their first Eucharist until grade 3 or even grade 4, AFTER they are ready for first Reconciliation.

We recognize that this practice may be different than parents are used to here in Leduc, and that it may change your plans for your children's celebration of the sacraments. Our parish team is happy to address any other concerns you may have.

Yours in Christ,

Father Michael Mireau

Sister Elaine Biollo, SC