



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Office of the Bishop

I often wonder how children feel when they raise their hands to receive the Eucharist and either the priest passes them by or their parents close their palms or shake their heads “no!” What do the children experience about Jesus Christ in that moment? What does the kingdom of God experience in that moment?

“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” Mark 10:15. This powerful image of Jesus, placing children at the center of his ministry in Mark’s Gospel, is a reminder that we are to allow children to encounter the risen Christ, and that we learn through their encounter so that we may see the kingdom of God and enter into it. I believe that this is simply a passage about the grace of God and how it is purely by God’s grace that we, no matter our age or experience, come to know God in the person of Jesus.

You have picked up this resource material because you are interested in helping children receive Communion. Clergy, educator, parent and or friend, each of us has a responsibility to bring children into a relationship with God through the sacrament of grace, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We promise at every baptism we attend that we will do all in our power to support these persons in their life in Christ. That is inclusion, not exclusion.

I will tell you that the work you are about to embark on will make a tremendous difference in the life of our children. It will forever impact your own understanding of the sacramental life of the church as it expresses Jesus Christ’s love for creation and his sacrificial work of bringing people back into communion with the God who is love.

Just as children should never experience a time when they do not believe they are a part of the family at table, there should not be a time when they do not feel a part of the communion of the family of Christians at the Lord’s Table. We lovingly bring children to our own table, share the stories of the family with them and absorb their joy and wonder in the event at hand. We all benefit from being together. Sometimes we even see with different eyes because of a child’s presence and engagement with the celebration.

I firmly believe that faith formation begins in the home. It is modeled through prayer over common meals, the prayers at bed time, prayers when times are hard, prayers and celebrations at holidays, birthdays and special family events. This material therefore not only has a church component but it also has a home component to help you as a

community bridge the gap between what we do faithfully at the Lord's table in church and what we practice faithfully at His table in our homes.

We have a tendency in our church to either create structures that are too strict or we dissolve all structures. In the past this has been true regarding Communion for children.

As a parent and bishop I know I cannot shy away from my responsibility to speak with my children at home and the children in this diocese about the meaning of Communion and about the meaning of the sacramental life we lead as Episcopalians.

This course is not designed to be a "graduation" course, which after completion permits a child to receive Communion. Rather, it is designed to be used on a regular basis to help children, their parents and their church family live into their baptismal promises as they continue in the teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers the church is called to do.

When I was growing up we called this time of preparation First Communion. We are made full members of the Body of Christ at our baptisms. My hope is that children will receive Communion when they show a desire to do so and as they receive and become curious about the mystery of the table by age eight they will have had the opportunity to come into contact with this material to help them and their families translate the mysterious and sacramental events of our table fellowship.

I am confident that you will find this resource to be an answer to the many requests we have received over the years for something of quality, something Anglican, which will help us and our children realize the power of the Lord's Table to which we are all welcome and invited.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Andrew Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle
IX Bishop of Texas