

A First Communion Reflection: Pope Pius X - The Pope of the Eucharist

As we know, a lot goes into preparing children for their First Communion, including fussing over special attire, new haircuts, new shoes. While it can seem as though there is too much focus on outward appearances and perhaps a bit of pageantry, the extra fuss does have a purpose: it underscores for our children (and the extended family) the importance of the special day, when the children are finally invited to experience communion with Jesus.

Occasionally, I find myself questioning whether we can sufficiently prepare such young children to understand the deeper meaning of the sacrament. Are they too young to embrace the mysteries of our faith? Two encounters this week erased any doubt for me.

From the words of a Second Grader: Mary Ellen Gold, our 2nd Grade teacher, shared the sentiment of one of her students who confessed he didn't always look forward to going to Mass, but now that he had made his First Communion, he was excited to go to Mass. *How wonderful is that!* We pray that all our Communicants will view their First Communion as their "first of many" visits to the Table of the Lord.

From the words of Pope Pius X: I was gazing at our stained-glass window of Saint Pius X, trying to recall why he was selected to join the seven other saints adorning the church's west wall. Fr. McCarthy reminded me that Pope Pius X is known as the 'Pope of the Eucharist' for lowering the age for reception of the sacrament from 12 to seven. In his 1910 decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments (*Quam Singulari*), Saint Pope Pius X beautifully explains the reason for admitting young children to the Sacrament:

"The pages of the Gospel show clearly how special was that love for children which Christ showed while He was on earth. It was His delight to be in their midst; He was wont to lay His hands on them; He embraced them; and He blessed them. ... It is clearly seen how highly He held their innocence and the open simplicity of their souls on that occasion when He called a little child to Him and said to the disciples: "... whoever receives one such little child for my sake, receives me." ... The Catholic Church, bearing this in mind, took care even from the beginning to bring the little ones to Christ through Eucharistic Communion."

Jesus beckons the children; and parents, you have responded! From the words of Jesus: "*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for such is the kingdom of God.*" Thank you to the parents, godparents, family, friends, volunteers and our catechists, priests and deacons who made, and will continue to make, the reception of the sacrament such a special experience for the children. Parents, we look forward to seeing your children at Mass each Sunday, as you continue to provide them with the opportunity to nourish their faith.

~ *Peace in Christ, Peggy Bradley, RE Coordinator*