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As pastor I have a passion for inclusion of all the baptized in the Body of Christ, including full participation in Holy Communion. We know that after Jesus Christ instituted Holy Communion and for the first 1200 years of the Christian Church, the baptized of every age participated in the Lord's Supper. Personally you may remember a time when the Church only recommended Holy Communion for confirmed members. Back in the 1970's the recommendation moved to 5th graders. Today, the church recommends that congregations invite all the baptized to Holy Communion, without regard for age or theological understanding as it is a gift and meal of grace and love, from Jesus, for all the baptized.

Consider these two statements from *The Use of the Means of Grace* (a teaching document of our church):

- Admission to the sacrament (Holy Communion) is *by invitation of the Lord*, presented through the church to those who are baptized.
- *There is no command* from our Lord regarding the age at which people should be baptized or first communed. . . . In all communion practices, congregations strive to avoid both reducing the Lord's Supper to an act effective by its mere performance without faith and narrowing faith to intellectual understanding of Christ's presence and gifts.

Your child's readiness to come to the Lord's Table is best determined by you—a parent or caregiver—in consultation with your pastor and, perhaps, a children's ministry staff person. Each child is different, and each will pick up on the significance of the meal at a different point. One important cue for readiness is whether your child showing signs of feeling excluded. Use questions like these to help you understand your child's sense of belonging in the faith community, so you can make a decision about readiness.

- Has your child been baptized?
- Is your child comfortable in various locations around the church, including at the altar?
- Will your child extend his or her hands when asked to do so?
- Does your child recognize the pastor and seem able to interact enough with him receive the elements?
- Is your child aware enough of others in the congregation and their needs to show a degree of respect for their communion experience?
- Are you prepared to help make the process positive?

Only the first question requires a yes before your child can be considered ready. Use the others to generate discussion and to plan, with your pastor, for your child's preparation to begin receiving the sacrament and the gifts it brings.

We will be doing a First Communion program for preschoolers and above in May. The days and times will be Wednesdays (May 2, 9, 16, and 23) from 6:30-7:30; OR Saturday, May 12 from 9:00-1:00. The First Communion for these children will be June 3.

If you would like to discuss your child's readiness please feel free to call me. Please register by downloading a form from the website or by calling or emailing the church office. I hope to see you at the classes.

Blessings to you on this journey!