

# First Confession, Communion

(Continued from 1B)

the kind of intellectual deliberation necessary to commit a mortal sin.

They began their study with the teaching of the Church regarding the three elements needed for serious sin, that is, grave matter, sufficient knowledge and full consent.

To fulfill these conditions a formal intellectual process is demanded. Such a process requires three elements: (1) the ability to abstract, that is, to deal in values and ideas which cannot be seen or touched; for instance God, hell, grace, justice; (2) the ability to relate with an eternal God and to understand the consequences of the ability to evaluate, in a critical manner, every choice which will alter his general way for life in a way in which he can be held responsible by God (the element of fundamental option).

Here is what Father Bernard Haring has said on this matter:

"The most rigid opinion might say that after ten years of age they (children) are capable of mortal sin. I doubt if a child of eleven or twelve years can commit a mortal sin. They must know what mortal sin is — that the merciful and just God punishes with a terrible sentence for all eternity. It is not in a moment that a child or a man decides his destiny; it is through the whole of life."

An objection: If a child cannot understand penance can he appreciate the Eucharist?

Yes. Because the Eucharist centers around a person — Christ. It deals with the concrete — the bread of life. The notion of love is not abstract but again concrete, experiential to the child; for from the time of his birth, love should have been a familiar part of his life. This is far from the intricacies of responsibility to a transcendental God and choices affecting the basic stance of one's life.

It is interesting to recall that at the turn of the century First Penance did precede First Communion. But we must remember that First Communion at that time was delayed until the age of twelve to fourteen so that confession, which was then made shortly before communion, was received at the psychologically best time in the child's life.

However, Pius X ordered that children be allowed to receive Holy Communion at the early age of seven. The saintly Pontiff, convinced of the innocence of children and their capacity to grasp the love of Christ in the Eucharist, felt that this divine nourishment should be given them at the earliest possible moment.

## Ecumenical Dinner A Moving Event

There were 325 women in a dinner party that moved around the western suburbs last Wednesday night from one church hall to another.

The party began with appetizers at St. Vincent de Paul, Churchville, and went on for salad at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany on Buffalo Road. At Holy Ghost, women of the parish and of St. Christopher's served the entree. Dessert and coffee were taken at Gates Presbyterian. The project was launched by the Sacred Heart Society of Holy Ghost.

## BAZAAR SCHEDULED

Auburn—The annual Christmas Bazaar sponsored by the Mercy Hospital Auxiliary will be held at the hospital Wednesday and Thursday, Nov. 11 and 12.

Knitted articles, aprons and Christmas decorations are among the wares to be sold. A sandwich lunch will be served at noon.

COURIER/2

By deferring the sacrament of penance we have separated it from the Eucharist. This separation is also a good thing. Too long have our people associated Penance and the Eucharist—to such an extent that they would not receive the one without the other.

Moreover, by separating the two, the distinctiveness and the individual dignity of each of these sacraments will be better impressed upon the child's mind.

It is so much more meaningful for the child, nurtured as he is by love, to be introduced first to the sacrament of love; and only later, to the sacrament meant to reconcile one who has lapsed in love from the God of Love.

Finally, one of the most important features of the guidelines is the part parents are asked to play in the preparation of their children for both sacraments. Always, the Church has said, "Parents are the chief educators of their children."

Undoubtedly, the present crisis in our educational system is forcing us to a deeper realization of this truth. Too long have parents let the school "do this for them."

Vatican II has declared in its decree On Education that the role of parents "as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it" (Art #3).

To assist parents in this mission of theirs, parental classes are imperative. I urge parishes to inaugurate such classes as suggested in the guidelines.

By adhering to these guidelines, we shall achieve diocesan unity on these tremendously important sacraments of the Christian life. I ask parents, especially, to set the example.

Let the child go to communion and to confession with its parents. And we urge that this be often. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

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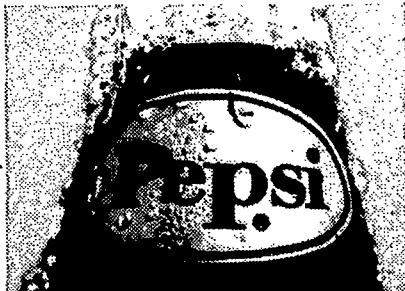
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Wednesday, November 4, 1970

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