

Stage 3 (c age 6-7)

CATECHISM

First Holy Communion preparation

If your child will be receiving Holy Communion in his/her seventh year, this year can be dedicated to First Confession and First Holy Communion preparation.

There are several good books to choose from. The essential thing is to give the child a solid grasp of what the sacraments are all about, but this is also a good time to start committing some of the most important catechism questions to memory. If your child struggles with memory work, just choose some of the simpler questions to discuss, though you might be surprised at what a young child can commit to memory. It is important that the child can express an understanding (however simple) of the concepts involved before he memorises the set answers. To make sure he understands, ask him to explain what the answer means in his own words.

The American [*Baltimore First Communion Catechism*](#) is very visual and the illustrations help fix the teachings in the child's mind. For memorization, however, the English [*Penny catechism*](#) has some advantages: with the Baltimore scheme, the child is expected to memorize three different *levels* of questions on the same material, which can cause confusion; with the Penny Catechism, you have all the questions and answers in one book - you simply choose the easiest ones for the youngest child. Later, when the child comes to learn more questions, he will be pleased to find that he has already covered quite a bit of the material and does not have to 'redo' it.

Also useful are Our Lady's Catechists two books, one on First Confession, one on [*First Communion*](#), though these are difficult to source in the UK. [*'The Bread of Life: Preparing for First Confession and First Communion'*](#) by Fr Martin Edwards is sound and more modern, if quite simple. It is readily available in the UK. The [*'Guidebook for Confession for children'*](#) from [Sinag-Tala Publishers](#) is good for a simple examination of conscience.

Whichever book or course you choose to follow, it is nice for the child to also build up a folder or project book (you can use a blank photo album), with various elements pertaining to the reception of the sacraments such as catechism questions studied, favourite or composed prayers, stories of saints connected with the Eucharist and so on. If you complete the book with photos of the big day, this can make a very nice keepsake.

Alternatives to First Holy Communion Preparation

If you are not preparing your child for First Holy Communion this year, you could repeat last year's schedule in more detail.

For example, if you didn't use the narration technique last year to produce your child's own bible story and saints book, try it now (see Catechism ages 5-6 for details). If you did use narration, use it again on different stories and let your child see how much his colouring, drawing, writing and story-re-telling abilities have all improved.

With regard to lives of the saints, you could place more emphasis on biographical details (the where's and when's). As well as reading a 'Saint for the day' together, you might encourage the older child to choose a book on just one saint, and perhaps use narration for each chapter. The Pauline Books [*'Encounter the Saints'*](#) series are good for this age group. They are American, but can

often be found via UK booksellers. My children have enjoyed '[*An alphabet of the Saints*](#)' by Robert Hugh Benson. It is old fashioned, but uses lovely language and is quite easy to memorise, if you are looking for poems.