Quinceañera

and

First Communion Resources

 

**Introductory Letter from Bishop Mathes**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego is diverse in so many ways. It is geographically diverse, it is linguistically diverse and it is culturally diverse. To better serve the people of our communities, we have put together this research on Quinceañeras and First Communions. It is my prayer that you will find these resources helpful to meet the particular needs of individuals in your congregation.

In all things that we do, we give thanks to God, we honor the dignity of all persons, we build up their spiritual lives. May God’s presence be with you in these moments of celebration and thanksgiving.

Faithfully,



*The Rt. Rev. James R. Mathes*

*Episcopal Diocese of San Diego*

*Easter 2015*

**Written by:** Rebecca Gleason

**Edited by:** Canon Nancy Holland and Hannah Wilder

**Graphics by:** Gertrud Mueller Nelson

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Quinceañera

***A Brief History***

While some state that the celebration of the quinceañera has roots in pre-colonized Aztec society, others claim that wealthy European families brought the idea to Mexico. Over time, participation in this custom has developed and changed to include a wider number of people celebrating in a number of different ways.

The most commonly held belief is that the modern-day quinceañera finds its roots in an ancient Aztec rite of passage. In Aztec culture, a woman’s main role was that of marrying and bearing children. It was at 15 or 16 years of age that a girl, after receiving training from elder women in their community, was presented as an adult. When Mexico was colonized, the Roman Catholic Church Christianized this ceremony. The 15th birthday became a time in which young girls were presented in the church as an adult member of society. For many, it was the time to either marry or commit their lives to the church.

Some find this explanation confusing because there is no evidence of an initiation ceremony for girls in Aztec society. Neither is there a similar custom in present-day indigenous groups. Rather, their belief is that the quinceañera is rooted in the upper-class European custom of presenting young women to society (similar to the debutante ball, or coming-out party, in the southern United States) and marrying them to socially important men. In colonial Mexico, only the very wealthy participated in the quinceañera celebration.

Regardless of how the quinceañera came to be, it continues to be a popular and important celebration for many girls and their families in Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States. Over the years, the population who participates in the quinceañera shifted from only the wealthy to include middle and lower classes. The custom has also become broader. While many still celebrate a traditional quinceañera, others choose instead to go on a trip, receive a gift, or save money by having a simpler party.

***Theological Implications***

The quinceañera is a rite of passage. It is traditionally a time in which a girl and her family, recognizing the teen years as a time of transition into adulthood, come to the church for a blessing. In Latin America and the United States, quinceañera practices vary widely, from extravagant parties to intimate celebrations. However, at its center is an opportunity for the quinceañera to refocus her life on Christ as she embarks on a new phase of life.

According to Article of Religion XXXIV, found on page 874 of the Book of Common Prayer, “It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like…and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.” In other words, diverse traditions or ceremonies are allowable, provided they do not contradict Scripture. As such, the Episcopal Church provides space for cultural expressions in the liturgy and life of the Church. With the previous explanation of the quinceañera in mind, there is nothing about this ceremony that would make it innately prohibited. Rather, it is simply a unique expression within the “One holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

The Episcopal Church, and the Diocese of San Diego in particular, has an opportunity to be a part of this celebration. The Church can play a large role in helping young women (and men) navigate this transition, both as a place of Christian formation and personal support.

***Current and Best Practices***

There are three main portions of a quinceañera: preparation, church service, and secular celebration. Those churches that offer quinceañeras usually provide some variation on the first two, and sometimes the third.

Preparing for a quinceañera generally requires that the girl and her parents meet a specified number of times with the priest who will perform the ceremony. During each session, the priest will present different topics which relate to the transition from childhood to adulthood. It may also be an opportunity for formation in the Episcopal tradition and the Christian faith.

The church service follows the structure of The Holy Eucharist with a renewal of baptismal vows and special prayers for the quinceañera. The following are commonly added to the basic service: additional prayers for all young people present, presentation of gifts by *padrinos/madrinas*, or aprayer to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The priest should also address the sermon to the quinceañera or all young people present.

Specific readings are chosen for the service (see suggested readings in the Sample Service).

A celebration among family and friends usually follows the mass. The organization for this falls to the family of the quinceañera, although churches may (usually for some fee) provide the space for the party.

*Special Notes:*

* In some churches, the idea of group quinceañeras is growing, in which several girls (and sometimes boys) are recognized during the regular Sunday service. The service would still include a renewal of baptismal vows and special prayers for the quinceañeras(os).
* A spiritual retreat prior to celebrating the quinceañera mass may be beneficial for young people to focus their lives on Christ as they transition into adulthood.
* Quinceañeras may be celebrated in English or Spanish, or may be bilingual.

***Recommendations***

Expressions of the Christian faith have varied increasingly through the years and across denominations and countries. Historically, the Church in the broad sense has been a dynamic entity, adjusting to fit language and customs. Beyond the many differences, church communities exist as places where people can gather to worship the Lord and support each other in their spiritual journeys.

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego sees the quinceañera as an opportunity for a community to come together, with a focus on God, to acknowledge an important life transition. It is, in part, a way for our church to remain open to cultural expression. At the same time, it is an opportunity for the broader church community to learn from the Latino/Hispanic church community. Most importantly, it is a way in which people can draw closer to God.

**The Quinceañera: An Order of Service**

**Introduction**

Beloved brothers and sisters: we have gathered to give thanks to God for the gift of life manifested in the fifteen years of life of . Families and friends, we are ready to celebrate with joy and happiness this Eucharist, praying to God for His continued protection and help for the rest of her life.

**Act of Penitence**

*"Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Wash me and I shall be clean indeed and my soul shall be white as snow.” (Psalm51)*

Brothers and sisters: before celebrating the holy mysteries we recognize our sins against God and against our neighbor.

*All together*

**Most merciful Father: We confess that we have sinned against you by our own fault in thought, word and deed and by what we have done and left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name**.**Amen**.

*The celebrant alone*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen**.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

*The celebrant greets the congregation*

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you

*People* **And also with you**

*Celebrant* Let us pray

Almighty and eternal God, we humbly pray that, as your Only Begotten Son was presented in the temple, in the same way has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gratefully come to celebrate the life that you have generously given her. Confirm her in her faith, strengthen her in her will, may her life be an example of Christian life. We ask you this, in the name of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. **Amen***.*

**Liturgy of the Word**

*For practical reasons, it is recommended to use only one reading before the Gospel. After this reading, a song can be sung.*

**Suggested readings:**

Old Testament

Jeremiah 1: 4-10 (Jeremiah´s vocation)

Judith 13:18-20 (Judith, a brave woman)

Isaiah 7:10-14 (The Virgin will give birth)

New Testament

Ephesians1:3-6 (The chosen in Christ before creation)

Galatians 4:4-7 (Divine brotherhood)

Romans 12:1-2 (The offering that is pleasing before God)

Gospel

Matthew 25:1-13 (The parable of the ten young maidens)

Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha)

Matthew 5:14-16 (The light of the world)

John 13:31-35 (A new commandment)

**Homily**

**Baptismal Covenant and presentation of the offering**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_since you were a girl, your parents and godparents, brought you to the temple to incorporate you, through holy Baptism, into the Church, the People of God. Then, on your behalf, they proclaimed the faith and accepted the responsibility of educating you in the Christian faith. The moment has arrived for you to accept, before all, the great responsibility and profess the faith that you bear in your heart.

*Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

*Youth* **I do.**

*Celebrant* Do you promise to fulfill your Christian obligations and be an example of life, and imitate Jesus Christ?

*Youth* **I will, with God's help**.

*Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

*Youth* **I will, with God's help.**

*Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

*Youth* **I will, with God's help.**

*The fifteen year old girl reads her words of offering*

**Thank you, Oh Lord, for allowing me to become fifteen, accept my youth, which I offer you wholeheartedly, and I promise to serve you every day of my life. Help me do your will here on earth, and may I, one day, in the company of my loved ones, know the bliss of eternal joy that you have prepared for us. Amen**.

*Or if preferred, say this prayer*

**Oh God, who chose theblessed Virgin Mary as mother of your incarnate Son, grant me, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, that I share with her the glory of your eternal kingdom, and following her example, I may learn to love** **you more every day of my life. To follow such a high example, I ask you Lord, grant me strength and courage so that I do not give into the temptations of life. I ask you this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.** **Amen.**

**The Prayers of the People**

Let us pray to the Lord by saying:

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for your holy catholic Church; that we all may be one.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all parents, may You grant them enthusiasm and wisdom in the education of their children.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and all youth present here today, so that they follow the path of righteousness and honesty that leads to eternal life.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

Oh God, hear the prayers of your people; and grant us what we have faithfully asked you, to the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen***.*

**Blessing and reception of gifts**

*Customarily, at this moment, the quinceañera receives presents, which may include a medal, a ring, a crown, a Bible and flowers. This varies from place to place. Las Mañanitas can be sung after giving her the presents.*

**The Peace**

**The Offertory**

**EucharisticPrayer**

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.

*People* **We lift them up to the Lord.**

*Celebrant* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*People* **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father, Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. For you are the light and source of life; who has made us in your image, and called us to a new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sings this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Celebrant and people*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

*The Celebrant continues*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night before he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks to you, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Celebrant and people*

**Chris has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

*The celebrant continues*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people, the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive his holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy and peace; and, at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ.

By him, and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy Name,**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,**

**for ever and ever. Amen.**

**The Breaking of the Bread**

*It may be said*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,

**Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,

**Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,

**Grant us peace.**

[Alleluia] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**Therefore let us keep the feast. [Alleluia]**

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

*During the communion there may be background music or a song may be sung.*

**Prayer after communion**

**Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank you for feeding us in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Grant us through the Holy Spirit, that may be to us an effective example in word and action, in holiness of life, loving her neighbor as herself, until she comes to your everlasting kingdom. For Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**The Blessing**

**Closing**

Let us go forth in the name of Christ!

**Thanks be to God.**

***Suggested Songs (in Spanish)***

**El pescador**

1. Tú has venido a la orilla.

No has buscado ni a sabios ni a ricos;

Tan sólo quieres que yo te siga.

**Señor, me has mirado a los ojos,**

**Sonriendo has dicho mi nombre,**

**En la arena he dejado mi barca,**

**Junto a Ti buscaré otro mar.**

1. Tú sabes bien lo que tengo;

En mi barca no hay oro ni espadas,

Tan sólo redes y mi trabajo.

1. Tú necesitas mis manos,

Mi cansancio que a otros descanse,

Amor que quiera seguir amando.

1. Tú pescador de otros lagos,

 Ansia eterna de almas que esperan,

 Amigo bueno, que así me llamas.

**Las Mañanitas**

Estas son las mañanitas,

Que cantaba el rey David.

Hoy por ser día de tu santo,

Te las cantamos a ti.

Despierta, mi bien, despierta;

Mira que ya amaneció.

Ya los pajaritos cantan;

La luna ya se metió.

Que linda está la mañana,

En que vengo a saludarte;

Venimos todos con gusto,

Y placer a felicitarte.

El día en que tú naciste,

Nacieron todas las flores.

En la pila del bautismo,

Cantaron los ruiseñores.

Ya viene amaneciendo

Ya la luz del día nos dio

Levántate de mañana

Mira que ya amaneció.

First Communion

***A Brief History***

In the early days of Christianity, particularly in the East, it was fairly common for infants to receive communion immediately after baptism. In Orthodox churches, this is still the standard practice. However, in the West, infant communion was generally restricted to occasions of serious illness, likely originating with the notion that the Eucharist was required for salvation. By 813, during the reign of Charlemagne, an edict was published by the Coucil of Tours that prohibited young children from receiving communion, except when the child was in danger of death. It was renewed again by Bishop Odo of Paris in 1175.

During the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, legislation was written that provided guidelines for receiving communion: “All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have reached the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year…receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist” (Canon 21).This legislation is still current in the Roman Catholic Church, and it is from this that the practice of children receiving FirstCommunion around age seven originates.

As recently as the 20th Century, the practice regarding the Eucharist in the Episcopal Church has been in line with that of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, it was ordered that, “…there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to beconfirmed.” Furthermore, Confirmation was described as, “Laying on of Hands upon those that are baptized, and *come to years of discretion*” (emphasis added).

It is only in the most recent Book of Common Prayer (1979) that this has changed. The requirements now state that “[Holy Communion] is the family meal for Christians and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. As such, all persons who have been baptized, and are therefore part of the extended family that is the Church, are welcome to receive the bread and wine, and be in communion with God and each other.”

However, the practice of children receiving their First Holy Communion after the age of discretionremains common in some parts of the Episcopal Church. This is especially true of Anglo-Catholic parishes. In addition, in countries with a strongRoman Catholic presence, such as many Central and South American nations, the First Communion experience is tied into culture.With this, First Communion programs are most commonly found in predominately Latino/Hispanic churches.

***Theological Implications***

The practice of preparation and a ceremony for a child’s First Communion has a long history in the Episcopal Church. While the details of the practice may vary, the overall purpose is generally the same. It is an opportunity for children to learn about their church and faith. It is rooted in the desire for children to understand the significance and importance of Holy Communion.

According to Article of Religion XXXIV, found on page 874 of the Book of Common Prayer, “It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like…and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.” In other words, diverse traditions or ceremonies are allowable, provided they do not contradict Scripture. With this, the Episcopal Church provides space for cultural expressions in the liturgy and life of the Church.

Moreover, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, adopted in 1886 and revised in 1888, in an effort towards Church unity, states that the following four articles are “a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion:The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing allthings necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith;The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as thesufficient statement of the Christian faith;The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself--Baptism and the Supperof the Lord--ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him;The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of itsadministration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.”

While there are many varying opinions on this topic, a First Communion celebration for children does not contradict any of the above statements made by the Episcopal Church. Consequently, those wishing to participate in the practice should not be prohibited. Rather, the Episcopal Church in the United States, the Diocese of San Diego in particular, has an opportunity to open its doors to those wishing to help their children understand the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

***Current and Best Practices***

Current practices in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego vary widely. Some churches invite all children of a certain age (generally 7 or 8 years old) to attend First Communion classes, while others begin offering communion to children as soon as they are physically old enough to receive it.

Few churches in this diocese still ask that children be of an age in which they can understand basic Eucharistic theology before receiving communion. Since the current teachings of the Episcopal Church state that all baptized Christians are welcome to receive, many have chosen to adjust their practice. Generally, the priest will take the parents’ lead when it comes to offering communion to children. In some cases, even when young children are already receiving communion, parents will request First Communion classes or a special service. In these cases, the focus moves from a literal “first communion” to a “first solemn communion,” or “formation for holy communion.”

Those who choose to participate in some form of a First Communion celebration embrace it as an opportunity for Christian formation. Classes continue to be a part of the preparation, and in many cases is the main focus. Some choose to incorporate the First Communion class into the regular Sunday school class, which includes instruction on Holy Communion. Others provide a separate class for those of a specified age in which they focus on the Eucharist and the basic tenets of the faith as found in the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer. Still others adapt or follow a curriculum. In many cases, parent involvement in classes is encouraged or required.

At the completion of the class, there is a day chosen, often at Easter, for the First Communion Mass. Often times, the children will come in elaborate outfits, which are traditionally white to represent purity. During this service, a special prayer or blessing is said for the children who are to receive their first communion, and they are the first to receive communion that day. Following the service, a reception may be held to celebrate those receiving their first communion.

***Recommendations and Resources***

Providing a First Communion program is not a requirement of the Episcopal Church. However, for those who desire to provide education about the Eucharist, or are part of a community that does, it can be an opportunity for Christian formation and further community development with young children and families in your parish.

Greater than the theological debate over whether completing a class is necessary, is the desire for our children to grow up understanding why we do what we do, and to have real, deep, and meaningful experiences with the Church.

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, recognizing the important role First Communion plays in a variety of cultures, would like to present several options that are currently in practice in the Diocese of San Diego for those who are interested in offering a First Communion course:

*Suggestions for Classes:*

* St. Paul’s Cathedral – classes incorporated into *Godly Play*(<http://www.godlyplay.org/>)
* St. Philip the Apostle, Lemon Grove – study the Catechism (*Book of Common Prayer*)
* St. Michael’s by-the-Sea, Carlsbad – follow the *Pflaum* curriculum (<http://pflaum.com/>)
* All Saints, Hillcrest – follow the *First Eucharist and Beyond* curriculum (Steve Mueller, *ed.*, order at <https://www.churchpublishing.org/>)

***First Communion Mass Guide Sheet***

The First Communion Mass follows the regular Eucharist service. Below are some suggestions to help make this service memorable and meaningful for those receiving their first communion, and give the larger congregation a greater understanding.

* Rope off pews in the front for children and their families.
* In the sermon, address or acknowledge the children that will be receiving, or discuss the significance of the Eucharist.
* Pray for those receiving their first communion in the prayers of the people.
* Say a special prayer for those who will be receiving their first communion (just prior to communion).
* Allow the children to receive the Eucharist first.

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