

Questions Kids Ask

One Sunday morning Pope John Paul II visited Saint Francis de Sales parish in Rome. He asked the children if they had any questions for him. Like their parish patron (also the patron saint of journalists), the children went right to the heart of the matter.

“Did your friends tease you for going to church?” one boy wanted to know.

“Not too much. I was free to go or not to go, but I wanted to go,” the pope responded.

“How did you learn so many languages?”

The pope tapped his forehead.

“Are you happy being pope?”

“You can see that I am,” he shot back.

“Why did you choose to become a priest?” and “If you had your life to live again, what would you do?” the children asked.

Pope John Paul explained that he didn’t choose to be a priest or pope. God first chose him. Then he planted a seed: “Perhaps God has already chosen one of you.”

Sometimes facing a group of children—or even one child—preparing for First Communion can be like facing the press corps at a news conference. They have lots of questions, and giving just the right answer is very important.

What do children preparing for First Eucharist really want to know? Their questions range from the mundane to the sublime. Here are some common questions and some insights from longtime catechists and experienced parents.

What will it taste like?

Second graders commonly want to know what the bread, and especially the wine, will taste like. This concern is usually taken care of by practicing with samples of unconsecrated bread and wine. Still, some have reservations.

What if I don’t like the taste of the wine?

Suggested answer: You don’t have to drink from the cup. You will receive Jesus fully in the bread. Or: I don’t like the taste of wine that much either. What I do is just take a tiny sip.

Will I get drunk from the wine?

Suggested answer: I would never put you in that position. I wouldn’t let you drink from the cup if I didn’t think it was okay. You only need to take a tiny sip.

What do I do if I drop the host?

Suggested answer: It probably won’t happen, but if it does, don’t worry about it. Simply pick up the host and carefully put it on your tongue.

Young children can also be very serious when it comes to learning about God (theology). They want to know how the host can really be Christ’s body. They’re very literal, and in our culture, much more scientific than mystical. “It doesn’t look like a body,” a child may comment. They don’t understand how this can really be Jesus. Tell them that no one completely understands how the bread and wine can really become the Body and Blood of Christ. But Jesus himself said that this is what happens, and so the Church has always taught this to be true. At the Last Supper, Jesus clearly told his friends, “This is my Body. Take and eat it. This is my Blood. Take and drink it. If you do not eat my Body and drink my Blood, you will not have everlasting life.” Christians listen to the words of Jesus and believe in them.

Pray for the wit and wisdom of the pope before you answer. His method was simple and direct, and spoken from the heart. For example, a boy preparing for First Communion once asked his teacher, “If we like it, can we go back for seconds?” She cleverly redirected the question, saying, “Yes, Jesus wants you to come back often, but only once at every Mass.”