NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Thoughts on communion denial

Renée Schafer Horton | Apr. 29, 2011 NCR Today

Yesterday's news about a Texas boy with cerebral palsy being denied the Eucharist in a first Communion Mass is awful on a number of levels.

First, the reporting in the ABC news piece is shoddy [1] and illustrative of why we need actual religion reporters in our newsrooms: "The important ceremony means the child has been embraced by the church community. And it is accompanied by traditional family celebrations and gifts."

Really? That's what First Communion is? The knowledge of the various sacraments or rites of particular faith groups is Religion Reporting 101, folks, and the ABC team didn't show up for class.

Second, the disconnect between local priest making a decision without first informing -- or consulting -- his local diocese was highlighted when a spokesperson from the San Antonio archdiocese said, "It's never our desire, hope or wish to withhold a sacrament from someone who wants or needs it." (The apparent lack of communication also makes one wonder how priestly obedience to the bishop is so important in Chicago [2], but can slip under the rug in Texas.)

And finally, the denial of a sacrament to a handicapped child by a priest who admitted that he had never met the child (!!), smacks of arrogance uninformed by the teaching of Jesus to "let the little children come to me."

It also shows a ridiculous disregard for a pastoral approach to a family in need. Why not meet with the family multiple times?

It is absolutely true that church practice is to withhold the Eucharist from children younger than age 7. But it is also true that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the mental capacities of the child with Cerebral Palsy. The least the priest should have done was investigate the situation on his own, in person. Maybe then he would have seen the face of Jesus in the child.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/18/2014 - 05:08*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/thoughts-communion-denial

Links:
[1] http://abcnews.go.com/Health/boy-cerebral-palsy-denied-communion-texas-catholic-church/story?id=13461019
[2] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/father-pfleger-and-obedience