

use of reason that is required, as the decree carefully tells us, "since the incipient use is enough; that is a certain use of reason." So, too, it continues, a full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine is not necessary for First Confession, nor for First Communion. There are still, normally, seven full years of parochial school teaching after the first Holy Communion, during which the child can acquire all this. For the present a knowledge of the elements necessary for salvation will suffice, and the power to distinguish the Holy Eucharist from material bread (Art. III)

In case of a prudent doubt whether the child has attained sufficient discretion there can be no reason for scrupulosity. On the one hand, no obligation exists on the part of parent or confessor to insist upon the Communion, while, on the other, the priest is perfectly free to administer it if he wishes, according to the principle "*in dubiis favores sunt ampliandi et odia restringenda.*" When, however, the seventh year has been reached the presumption is clearly in favor of the child. Such is the argumentation of the great canonist and moral theologian, Father Juan B. Ferreres, S. J.

Acting thus generously and zealously upon an indication of the existence of the use of reason in the child, there can be no possibility of any irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament on our part. For even should the child not have attained sufficient discretion, there has most certainly taken place an increase of grace in its soul, while to the Sacred Heart of the Master there has been given a new thrill of joy in the love that went out from It to the fortunate little one.

If such language seem strange in our time it is none the less most absolutely true. While Holy Communion is not a necessity before the age of reason, yet it is a spiritual favor which we know was for centuries granted in the Church to even the youngest of the children, and which with each reception increases in their souls the gift of sanctifying grace. Around this custom grew up in the early Church some of her most beautiful practices. Children were to come to the Holy Table immediately after the clerics. As the favorites of God's love, they were