

It is beyond all question that the admission of children to their First Communion forms no part of the parish priest's special prerogatives. He has indeed the duty of seeing that his flock keep the commandments of the Church, and, in particular, that those who have reached the years of discretion fulfil the Easter duty: hence he must take care that children who have attained that age comply with it. But from this priestly duty it cannot be inferred that he has any *exclusive right* in the matter. No law can be quoted as conferring it upon him. The learned Père Bouix used to say: "A false notion is daily gaining strength in France that the right of admitting children to their First Communion belongs to the parish priest. This novel theory hardly needs refutation, and is practically unheard of among doctors and canonists. There is nothing in canon law that gives the faintest support to it."

The Very Reverend Father Wernz teaches that Communion received in private form does not fall under the exclusive right of the parish priest. As for Communion in solemn form, that may be reserved to the parish either by custom, or by diocesan statutes, but always saving legitimate privileges, such as those enjoyed by exempt communities.

"Granting" says Père Cros, "what in truth cannot be conceded, namely, that a child is under no obligation to communicate as soon as he has sufficient discretion, he would still have the right to do so if he insisted. This is the opinion of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, with Suarez and others".

But there remains another point of view to be carefully considered; namely, that it is morally necessary, or at least highly useful for a child, if sufficiently prepared, to receive Communion sooner than the ordinary time fixed by diocesan statutes for First Communion. For, if the understanding is developed, passions also will awake and threaten the baptismal innocence of the young soul. "Up to the age of eight or nine a child has been spotless through ignorance of evil. But after this period, it will some day or other almost certainly come