

ren should be admitted to the holy mysteries are the father, and the priest to whom a child goes to confession; for it is the duty of these to question children with a view to ascertaining whether they have acquired some understanding of this adorable Sacrament and have an appreciation for it." Moreover, the degree of understanding demanded by the Roman Catechism is merely that "the child be able to distinguish between this Bread and ordinary bread. For this it must firmly believe that the Eucharist contains the true Body and Blood of God."

In view of the above quotation, the "Annales," organ of the Association of 'Priest Adorers,' and of the "Priests Communion League," pertinently asks: How are we to reduce this rule of the Catechism literally to practice? In other words, how soon, as a general rule, do children develop sufficient discretion? Saint Alphonsus wrote to his clergy as follows: "Notice that, in the common opinion of doctors of the Church, the obligation of children to receive Communion begins to hold from the age of nine or ten." To this one may add that forward and intelligent children possess the needful intelligence from the age of seven or eight(1). Others, on the contrary, who are slow and dull of wit, or whose endowments of intellect and memory are exceptionally poor, will not have acquired even this rudimentary knowledge by the age of eleven or twelve. Yet the number of children capable of receiving Communion before the age of nine is found to be far larger than of those who only become fit after the age of ten. This is what Saint Alphonsus says: "Doctors agree that, as a rule, children are not bound to communicate until their ninth or tenth year," (*i. e.*, ninth or tenth year *completed*). "We say 'as a rule' for as authors observe, children may come under obligation earlier, that is to say, when they develop sufficient discretion before that age."

(1) From the above we see that it is the presence or absence of the degree of *discretion* needed, and not *age*, which determines the whole question. Thus, in the actual discipline of the Church, it cannot happen, in the present matter, that a child may be allowed to communicate and yet not be bound to do so owing to its fewness of years. (to be continued)