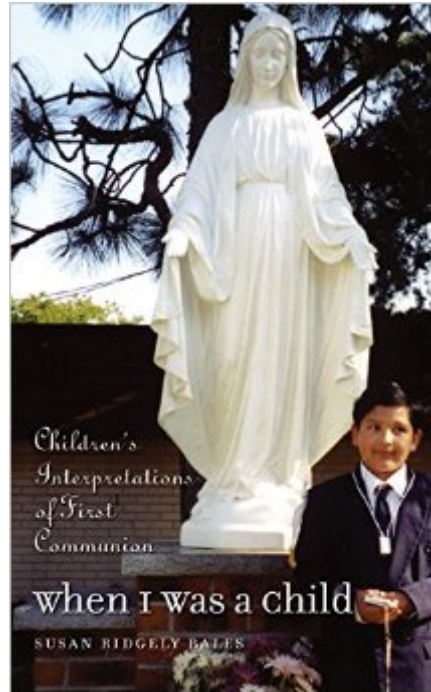


The book was found

When I Was A Child: Children's Interpretations Of First Communion



Synopsis

First Communion is generally understood as a rite of passage in which seven- and eight-year-old Catholic children transform from baptized participants in the Church to members of the body of Christ, the universal Catholic Church. This official Church account, however, ignores what the rite actually may mean to its participants. In *When I Was a Child*, Susan Ridgely Bales demonstrates that the accepted understanding of a religious ritual can shift dramatically when one considers the often neglected perspective of child participants. Bales followed Faith Formation classes and interviewed communicants, parents, and priests in an African American parish and in a parish containing both white and Latino congregations. By letting the children speak for themselves through their words, drawings, and actions, *When I Was a Child* stresses the importance of rehearsal, the centrality of sensory experiences, and the impact of expectations in the communicants' interpretations of the Eucharist. In the first sustained ethnographic study of how children interpret and help shape their own faith, Bales finds that children's perspectives give new contours to the traditional understanding of a common religious ritual. Ultimately, she argues that scholars of religion should consider age as distinct a factor as race, class, and gender in their analyses.

Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; 1 edition (September 26, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807856339

ISBN-13: 978-0807856338

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,403,357 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in [Books > Children's Books > Religions > Christianity > First Communion](#) #1173 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Children's Studies](#) #1842 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Institutions & Organizations](#)

Customer Reviews

Susan Bales has written a wonderfully insightful book on the experiences of Catholic children as they prepare for, and participate in, First Communion. This is a must read for Catholic educators of

children and their parents. The book is also a treasure trove for scholars of Religion American - filled with rich research and analysis. A gem!

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