

PARENT INFORMATION

This Family First Communion Retreat is designed to help you to prepare with your child for their First Holy Communion.

There are five sessions, each of which require 30 – 45 minutes to complete.

1. Passing on Your Faith
2. Bread for the Soul
3. The Weight of the Mass
4. Celebrating Mass
5. The Liturgy

Each session resource begins with a parent overview laying the foundation for the lesson you will work on with your child. The “Together with your child” section outlines the specific activities you will do together. Please be sure to complete the entire activity.

Set a schedule for when you will complete these activities with your child. To make this a sacred time, turn off your phone. Try to do these activities when you are fresh, rather than at the end of a long day. Have fun!

Before each session:

- Read the lesson overview
- Do any additional reading preparation to answer questions (see suggestions below)
- Preview the video, noting talking points you would like to make

You will need a:

- quiet space
- device to view the session video
- printed copy of the session worksheet
- pencil and/or markers to complete the worksheet

Parent Resources:

- Sophia SketchPad: The Eucharist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcB7Uem00n4>
- Teaching the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: <https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/07/teaching-real-presence/>
- CatholicsComeHome.org: <https://www.catholicscomehome.org/your-questions/church-teachings/the-eucharist/>
- Bishop Barron explains the Real Presence in the Eucharist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJjW3LXuHzo>



MY FIRST COMMUNION PRAYER

Dear Jesus,
You love me and want to give Yourself to me
in the Holy Eucharist.
I am excited to receive You in the Eucharist.
Help me to prepare my heart to receive You.
Thank you Jesus for loving me.
I will try to love You every day.
Amen.

Session 1

Passing on the Faith

Talking about God – Faith. Talking to God – Prayer.

Studies show that talking to your children from an early age is one of the best ways to ensure their academic success. The same holds true when you talk to your children about the faith. Parents who discuss their faith and the role it plays in their lives are more likely to have children who are ready to learn about God and His love.

In the faith formation partnership between parish and family, it is sometimes easy to let the “professionals” do the teaching in the religious education class. However, children need to hear about, and experience faith with their parents in the context of family life. This does not mean you need to be a theologian, you simply need to be ready and willing to discuss your faith – why it is important to you, how do you pray, how has faith helped you in your daily life, and so on.

Remember, dialogue goes both ways – speaking and listening. Children who listen to their parents speak about faith are more likely to ask questions about faith. Be sure to listen to your children’s thoughts and questions with care and attention.

Together with your Child:

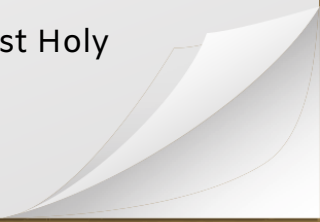
- Begin with the First Communion Prayer included with these materials.
- Tell your child about their Baptism (include photos, Baptism Candle as available).
- Tell your child it is now their turn to ask you questions about faith using the following Parent/Child interview. Be sure to set aside uninterrupted time for this activity.
- Follow-up by asking your child what they most like about Church. Ask your child to name their favorite way to pray. Ask them, “Did you know that prayer is like this conversation?” When we pray, we talk and listen to God about the things that matter to us.
 - Talking point: When you talk and listen to someone, you learn about them and your relationship is made stronger. You become friends with that person. Remind your child that prayer is a conversation. In prayer, you talk to and listen to God. When you pray to God you become His friend, you grow closer. It is important to pray every day, even if it is only say hello to Jesus, or to say thank you to Him.
- Pray together, thanking God for your child. Make the Sign of the Cross on his/her forehead as you end the prayer.

Throughout the week, keep the conversation going. See

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/50-questions-to-ask-your-kids-at-the-dinner-table/> for ideas for family conversation starters.



Student Interview of Parents

1. What is your favorite Church song?
 2. What is your favorite Church holiday? Why?
 3. What is your favorite prayer?
 4. Who is your favorite saint?
 5. Who helped you to learn about Jesus?
 6. What is your favorite memory of that person?
 7. Do you believe in miracles?
 8. What is your favorite miracle of Jesus? Why?
 9. Why is your faith important to you?
 10. Why do you want me to make my First Holy Communion?
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Lesson 2

Jesus: Food for the Soul

Our bodies need food and water to grow. So do our souls.

Our families give us the food we need to strengthen our bodies because they want us to be healthy. Jesus gives us our spiritual food because He wants our souls to grow. He gives us the Eucharist. Receiving the Eucharist every Sunday is the best way for us to grow in our love for Jesus. The Eucharist helps us to love others as Jesus loves them too!

Together with your child:

- Begin with prayer – you can use your own or the Prayer for First Communion.
- Watch this video: Eucharist: Food for Soul, <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/first-communion/program-view/>. Scroll down to select Session 4 on The Eucharist. Then scroll to the bottom of the page and select Lesson 1: Food for the Soul.
- Discuss how food helps our bodies and souls to grow.
- Bake bread together (using the recipe below) to explain the difference between our baked bread and the Body of Christ.
 - Talking point – When the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward at Mass, they are just bread and wine, similar to the bread we are making. The bread we are making does not have much flavor. Just bread to eat, it would not be our favorite. The same is true for the Eucharistic Host; it does not have much taste. During the Eucharistic prayer, the Priest calls on the Holy Spirit to come and change the bread and wine into the Body of Christ and Blood of Christ. The taste does not change, but it is now Jesus, so it is the best Bread in the world.
- Together with your child, write a prayer of thanks to Jesus for the gift of the Eucharist. Use the “My Prayer of Thanks” worksheet.
- Pray this prayer of thanksgiving as you share the bread you baked together.

Unleavened Bread Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour (white or whole wheat)
- 1/3 cup oil (olive or vegetable)
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup water



Directions:

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Mix flour, oil, and salt together in a bowl; add water and mix until dough is soft.
- Form dough into 12 small balls and press into disks onto the prepared baking sheet.
- Use a knife to trace a cross on each disk.
- Bake in the preheated oven until bread is a light golden color, 12-15 minutes. Baking time varies; be sure to watch the oven carefully.





My Prayer of Thanks for the Eucharist

Session 3

The Weight of the Mass

Never forget the importance of the Mass.

Sometimes we give the wrong value to things, oftentimes giving them too much weight in our lives. The first and third Commandments – “I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me” and “Keep holy the Sabbath” – teach us that we are to love God above all things. We show our love for God in different ways, like when we pray, care for others and take care of the earth. However, the best way to show our love for God is to worship Him in the Sunday Mass.

God, in His care for us, gives us everything we need to live. In His generosity, He gives us countless blessings to enjoy. God wants us to enjoy these blessings, but we are to do so in right relationship to Him. Before all else we must give the Mass the importance in our lives that it deserves. Finding the balance is key. God is the one that outweighs every other good. Before all else, we must worship God. In the Mass, we give God the importance in our lives that He deserves.

Together with your child:

- Begin with prayer – you can use your own or the Prayer for First Communion.
- Watch: “The Weight of a Mass: A Tale of Faith” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICDdm-NqtoQ&feature=youtu.be>.
- Discuss the video with your child. Ask, “Why do you think the piece of paper was heavier than all the baked goods? Was it the paper or the words on the paper?”
 - Talking point: Weight can mean something is heavy, but weight can also mean something is very important. In this story, the meaning of the words “one Mass” were what gave weight to the paper. The meaning of the Mass in our lives is to make us holy, give us peace, receive Jesus, forgive sins, and provide grace in our families and communities. These things are the “weight” of the Mass.
- Complete “The Weight of the Mass” worksheet with your child.



The Weight of the Mass

In the story, The Weight of the Mass, the people of the village learned that we sometimes forget that the Mass is our greatest gift.

Sometimes we let other things feel more important than celebrating Mass each week. Use the columns below to list 5 things that make the Mass so important.

On the other side, list 5 things that are important to you, but are not as important as Mass.

The Mass

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Other Things

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

As a family, list three things you will do to make Mass the most important thing to do together each Sunday.

1.

2.

3

Lesson 4

Celebrating the Gift of the Mass

When we celebrate Mass, we use our minds, hearts, and bodies.

Sometimes we forget that we do not just “go to Mass,” but we *celebrate* Mass. We *go* to the grocery store, but we *celebrate* a party. When we celebrate, we are actively engaged in what is happening; trying to use all our senses so we do not miss anything.

God gave us five senses to use when we experience His creation. We use our senses when we celebrate Mass too. The Mass is a celebration where we give praise to God. We celebrate God and His mercy and love, we thank Him for His blessings, most of all we receive Him in the Eucharist. When we celebrate Mass, we use our five senses to help us to experience both the visible and invisible presence of God.

Together with your Child:

- Begin with prayer – you can use your own or the Prayer for First Communion.
- Watch – From the Bible: Creation: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/program-view>. Scroll down to select Session 1 – Sunday Is Special. Then scroll to the bottom of the page to select Lesson 5: From the Bible: Creation.
- Talk with your child about the video; remind them how they use their senses to experience God’s Creation through nature. All of Creation is a gift from God. You might recall a favorite vacation or trip to the beach and the senses they used in that time/place.
- The Mass is also a gift from God. Explain to your child how you use all five senses to experience Mass too. Help your child remember this experience by imagining they are back inside your church. Ask questions about the altar, the Holy Water font, windows, statues, etc.
- Now help them recall a time you were at Mass together. Talk about where you were sitting, what season was it, was there music, etc. Ask them to think about the senses they use when they are celebrating Mass.
- After you have created this memory, work with your child to complete the “I Celebrate Mass” worksheet.

I CELEBRATE MASS

The perfect way to thank God for your blessings.

Describe how you use your 5 senses when you are at Mass.

I saw:



I smelled:



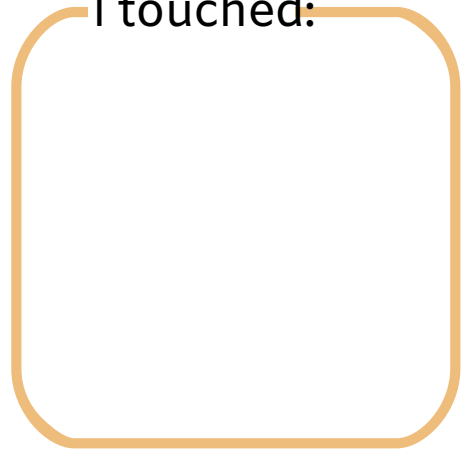
I tasted:



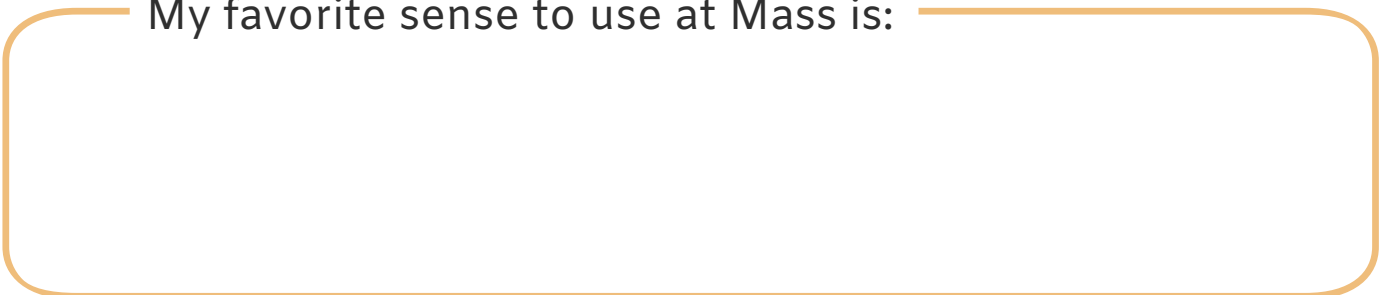
I heard:



I touched:



My favorite sense to use at Mass is:



Lesson 5

The Liturgy

Liturgy is the public worship of God. It is our perfect way to pray and praise God.

The Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Liturgy of the Word, we pray the Gloria, listen to the first and second readings, sing or say the Psalm, hear the Gospel proclaimed and listen to the homily. The Liturgy of the Word ends when we pray the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). Just as the Eucharist feeds us, we are fed by the Word of God. In the liturgy of the Word, Jesus teaches us to live happy, holy lives. The Liturgy of the Word prepares our hearts and minds to receive Jesus in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we bring our gifts to God. These gifts are then transformed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into the precious Body and Blood of Jesus. The Eucharist is the summit and source of Catholic life – every good comes from the Eucharist and leads us back to the Eucharist.

Because this is such a great gift, it is important that we actively participate in the Liturgy. This means we not only listen, but we respond. It is important that we make our responses in a clear voice. To do this, we need to know the responses by heart.

Together with your child:

- Begin with prayer – you can use your own or the Prayer for First Communion.
- Watch: The Liturgy of the Eucharist: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/first-communion/program-view/>. Scroll down to select Session 4 on The Eucharist. Then scroll to the bottom of the page and select Lesson 2: The Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Discuss with your child the importance of participating in Mass. Actively participating in Mass means we listen carefully to the readings, we stand, sit and kneel with everyone else, and we respond to the words and the prayers of the priest.
- Help your child to complete the Mass responses using the “Liturgy Responses” worksheet.
- Practice these responses with your child as you help them prepare for their First Communion.
- Help your child prepare for the day of their First Holy Communion by practicing the steps to receive the Eucharist (Receiving the Eucharist).

WE RESPOND



During Mass, we respond to the words and prayers of the priest.

In each box write our response to the words of the priest that we hear during both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Lord be with
you...

The Word of the
Lord...

The Gospel of the
Lord...

Let us give thanks to
the Lord our God....

Behold the Lamb of
God, behold him who
takes away the sins of
the world.

Peace be with you...

You have been getting your heart ready to receive Jesus at your First Holy Communion. Because Jesus is our most precious gift, you should also prepare for how you will actually receive Jesus in the Sacrament on that special day, and every Sunday after! Practice these steps at home with your family so you will know what to do on the day of your First Holy Communion.



RECEIVING THE HOST

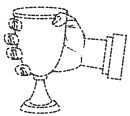
- Join the Communion line and walk slowly toward the priest (or Eucharistic minister) - do not look around the congregation for friends
- As you walk, remember that you are offering yourself to Jesus
- Bow reverently before receiving communion
- As you approach the minister, make a “plate” with your hands, placing your right hand under your left hand
- Your hands should be as high as your heart - that is where you welcome Jesus
- When the priest says "The Body of Christ", you respond “Amen” - be sure to look at the priest (or Eucharistic minister) as you accept the Host

RECEIVING IN YOUR HANDS

- Use the hand on the bottom of the “plate” (usually your right hand) to pick up the host and place it on your tongue
- Make the Sign of the Cross on your body and step away to let the next person in line receive the Eucharist

RECEIVING ON YOUR TONGUE

- Keep your head straight or tilted slightly back, open your mouth wide and extend your tongue - do not move your head
- The minister will place the Host on your tongue
- Wait until the Host is safely placed on the tongue and only then return your tongue and close your mouth
- Make the Sign of the Cross on your body and step away to let the next person in line receive the Eucharist



RECEIVING THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

- When the priest says "The Body of Christ", you respond “Amen” clearly and look at the priest (or Eucharistic minister) as you accept the chalice by reaching both hands out to accept the chalice
- Take a small sip of the wine, then return the chalice to the priest (or Eucharistic minister)
- Fold your hands and prayerfully return to your seat
- Do not stop to greet friends/family as you return to your pew
- After saying a prayer of thanksgiving, sing the communion hymn