

Eucharist

We give Thanks and Praise

PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S MANUAL



For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26

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Eucharist

We Give Thanks and Praise

Implementing the Program

Catechesis on the Mass provided in systematic parish catechetical programs is an indispensable part of the preparation of children for their first reception of the Eucharist.

National Directory for Catechesis 36A3.a

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Welcome!



As the Catechetical Leader, you have many tasks to perform as you plan and implement your parish Sacrament preparation program. RCL Benziger wants to assist you in your ministry by providing a guide that will help make Sacrament preparation a holy and memorable experience for the children, their families, and the whole parish.

The *Program Director's Manual* is divided into four sections that reflect a whole community catechesis for Eucharist.

- **Implementing the Program** provides background and direction for using RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* successfully.
- **Forming the Catechists** suggests ways to assist your catechists in the use of the program. Additionally, reproducible articles are provided that will give the catechists a theology of the Sacrament of Eucharist.
- **Involving the Parish** offers ideas for involving the whole parish in the Sacrament preparation of the children for first Eucharist.
- **Connecting to Families** presents ways to include the whole family in the Sacrament preparation of their children. This section also contains reproducible articles for parent education on the Sacraments.

The material in the *Program Director's Manual* is comprised of four major categories:

- **Articles** about the Sacrament of the Eucharist
- **Group sessions** for parish adult education, for catechists, and for parents and their children
- **Suggestions** for implementing the program and involving the parish
- **Other reproducibles** including a scope and sequence chart, a bibliography for families, a bibliography for catechists, a sample letter to parents, bulletin inserts and more

May God bless you in your ministry to the children, their families, and the whole parish!

The RCL Benziger Vision

A Creative Perspective



Introduction

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. “Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord’s own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1322).

The Eucharist is the ritual, sacramental action of giving thanks and praise to the Father. It is the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his body, the Church, and is the continuing presence of Christ in his Word and in his Spirit (*National Directory for Catechesis* 36A3).

A Vision of Sacramental Catechesis

The tools for catechesis are the Sacred Scripture and the Rites. In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides the basic content of catechesis. The *National Directory for Catechesis* provides a strategic plan.

The following list outlines RCL Benziger’s vision of catechesis.

1. *True Mission and Ministry:* We believe that catechesis is a ministry for the entire baptized community. It is a priestly ministry rooted in the priesthood of all the baptized.
2. *An Evangelical Ministry:* We believe that catechesis is a call to proclaim the Good News and for the faithful to live and witness that Good News.
3. *A Ministry of the Entire Community:* We believe that catechesis is one of the primary functions of the parish and that the parish is the catechist.
4. *A Ministry of Initiation:* We believe that catechesis is in the service of initiation. It is part of the gradual process by which people encounter God, join the faith community, and are formed in it.

5. *A Mature Ministry:* We believe that the product of all catechesis is the adult believer of mature faith. All members of a parish are both the subjects and objects of this evangelical ministry.
6. *A Ministry of God's Own Pedagogy:* We believe that the ministry of catechesis is more than just instruction or a course of study. We believe that God has provided the pedagogy—a gradual Revelation through creation, through the Incarnation event, and through the history of Salvation. We believe in the divine invitation, the journey of discovery, and the life of witness.
7. *A Ministry of Inculturation:* We believe that there is no message if a person cannot hear it. Therefore, the message we proclaim has to be embedded in culture, language, and images of the people and age groups who are the receivers of the catechetical ministry.
8. *A Trinitarian and Christocentric Ministry:* We believe that the people who receive this ministry must be formed in the life of the Blessed Trinity and in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
9. *A Communal Ministry:* We believe that the Church is the presence of Christ in the world. Catechesis proclaims a message of continuity. Personal Salvation is seen within the context of the life of community. All catechesis springs from and leads to participation in the life of Christ—the life of the Christian community.
10. *A Sacramental Ministry:* Catechesis uses all the tools, signs, symbols, and media to proclaim the Gospel. It reveals God the way God reveals—through the created world. The human senses encounter the footsteps of God, and catechesis helps people follow the way.

A Creative Mission

In this Sacrament preparation program, it is RCL Benziger's mission to bring together the best and most creative materials

- for those being catechized
- for the formation of the catechists
- for the families in the parish
- and for the whole parish

It is our mission, too, to assist in catechesis by creating materials that raise the bar. It is our conviction that if we answer the call to provide the best and most creative materials, God will provide the spiritual growth.

Aims of the Sacrament Preparation Program

- To help children understand that to participate in the Eucharist is to become a full member of the Body of Christ
- To focus on the prayers and primary symbols of the liturgy as the starting point for sacramental catechesis
- To introduce the idea and importance of mystagogy and lifelong reflection
- To encourage celebration of initiation during the Paschal (Easter) season. Even when Christian initiation is celebrated outside the usual time, the text for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used (see RCIA 247)
- To enable the catechists to become familiar with the liturgical documents and the Rites
- To provide a process for parents and other adults to actively participate in the Sacrament preparation of the children
- To stress the idea of service to the community as a way of living out the call of Baptism
- To acknowledge the place of the Eucharist in the life of the Church

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Eucharist

Taking direction from the *National Directory for Catechesis*, RCL Benziger presents a catechesis for the sacrament of Eucharist that

- develops understanding that the Eucharist is a living memorial of Christ's Sacrifice for the Salvation of all
- teaches that the Eucharist is a sacred banquet, a commemoration of Jesus' last meal with his disciples
- includes instruction that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ, his Real Presence under the appearances of bread and wine
- teaches that Christ is also present in his Word, in the body of the faithful gathered in his name, and in the person of the priest
- explores the meaning of the ritual, symbols, prayers, and gestures of the Mass and helps them participate actively and consciously in the Mass
- includes instruction on the implications of the Eucharist for the Church's mission in the world and for social justice
- uses Scripture stories as a basis for catechesis on Eucharist
- makes the connection between Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
- encourages regular celebration of the Sacrament of Eucharist

Readiness for the Reception of the Sacrament of Eucharist

“Parents and the parish catechetical leader or catechist, together with the pastor, are responsible for determining when children have attained the age of reason and are ready to receive First Communion⁴⁰⁵. . . . Parents also have the right and the duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Communion” (*National Directory for Catechesis* 36A3.a).

Along with preparation of the child for the celebration of the Sacrament, parents should also be involved in discerning the child’s readiness for the Eucharist. In general, readiness for reception of this Sacrament includes awareness of the Church’s belief about Jesus Christ, knowledge of the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread, and a desire to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

The following questions may be used to determine a child’s readiness for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Remember that actions speak louder than words. Look to a child’s behavior as well as the words they use.

- Does the child understand that the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ?
- Does the child know the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread?
- Does the child participate actively and consciously at Mass?
- Does the child display an attitude of reverence at Mass?
- Does the child know the proper way to receive Holy Communion?
- Does the child desire to receive the Eucharist?

The Church requires that the children receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for the first time prior to First Holy Communion.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. CIC, cc. 914, 777 2^o; cf *Code of Canons of Eastern Churches* (CCEO), c. 619.

Scope and Sequence

Chapter	Faith Summary	Catechetical Documents
1 Belonging	The Sacraments of Christian Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. A Sacrament is a special sign of God's love and presence. Baptism forgives Original Sin and initiates a person into the Church. Vocabulary: Sacraments of Christian Initiation, Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Original Sin, Sacrament	*NDC 35B, 36A, 36A3.a, 36A3b1, 48E2 **CCC 985, 1275, 1279
2 Gathering	Every Sunday Catholics gather as the early Christians did to celebrate the Eucharist. At Mass we remember the Paschal Mystery, hear the Word of God, pray together, and share in Holy Communion. We are one Church, the Body of Christ. Vocabulary: Christians, Catholics, Eucharist, procession, mercy	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 48E2 CCC 777, 1407, 2191
3 Listening	The Bible is God's Word for us. We listen to God's Word at Mass during the Liturgy of the Word. God's Word calls us to act on it in our daily lives. Vocabulary: Liturgy of the Word, Gospel, homily, Creed	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 48E2 CCC 1190, 1408, 1802
4 Giving Thanks and Praise	God gives us many gifts out of love. We are called to give thanks and praise to God. The Eucharist is our celebration of thanks and praise to God through Jesus. Vocabulary: Liturgy of the Eucharist, Eucharistic Prayer, thanks, praise	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 48E2 CCC 68, 454, 1408, 1412
5 Remembering	The Eucharist is a meal of remembrance. Jesus gives us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise. Vocabulary: Last Supper, sacrifice, consecration, Memorial Acclamation, Passover	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 48E2 CCC 621, 1412, 1413
6 Sharing a Holy Meal	Jesus is the Bread of Life. The Eucharist is a sharing in the gift of Jesus. At Mass the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Vocabulary: Holy Communion, Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace, Lamb of God	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 48E2 CCC 805-807, 14167
7 Serving Others	Jesus is our model of service to those in need. The Mass sends us out to continue Jesus' mission of service. The Eucharistic celebration provides us with God's grace to serve others. Vocabulary: mission, grace, blessing	NDC 35B, 36A3, 36A3a, 36A3b1, 42A, 43B, 48E2 CCC 849, 2017, 2023
8 Living Eucharist	The Sacraments are a mystery. Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine that we receive at Eucharist. Sacraments are a call to lifelong conversion. Vocabulary: mission	NDC 35B, 35D, 36A3, 36A3a, 43B, 48E2 CCC 1075, 1131

* *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* ***Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*

Scripture	Living the Faith	Liturgy and Prayer
The Blessing of the Children (Mark 10:14-16) Galatians 3:26 Isaiah 43 Psalm 100:1-3,5	Design a sign of belonging. Draw pictures that are reminders of Baptism. Review the signs of Baptism. Draw pictures of ways to live our Baptism. Home and Family Share memories of our Baptisms. Discuss what it means to be a member of the Church.	Words and actions of the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Confirmation; Psalm 100:1-3, 5
Communal Life (Acts 2:42-47) 1 Corinthians 10:17 1 Corinthians 12:27	Make a list of what you are thankful for. Determine ways in which parish members are like early Christians. Discuss aspects of parish life. Home and Family Discuss how participating in the Eucharist leads to a sense of belonging to the Church. Choose a parish activity to do together.	Introductory Rites; Entrance Procession; Greeting; Penitential Act; Gloria
The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9) Luke 11:28 Psalm 95:7 John 15:12	Know the parts and sequence of the Liturgy of the Word. List or draw ways of listening to and acting on Jesus' Commandment to love one another. Home and Family Talk about why Jesus' message is Good News for everyone. Discuss the Gospel heard at Mass.	Liturgy of the Word: First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel, homily, Profession of Faith, Prayer of the Faithful
Dependence on God (Matthew 6:25-30) Psalm 30:5	Write about gifts that can be offered to God and the gifts given by God. Write a prayer of thanks. Identify specific ways to thank God for his spiritual gifts. Home and Family Talk about how gifts from God are shared with members of the family. Before eating meals together, say a prayer of thanks to God.	Liturgy of the Eucharist: Preparation of the Altar and Gifts, Eucharistic Prayer
The Last Supper (Luke 22:19-20) 1 Corinthians 11:26	Know the priest's words during the consecration. Write about ways of showing unselfish love. Write a thank-you note to Jesus for his sacrifice. Home and Family Share what the family remembers about the Paschal Mystery. Make a sacrifice together by working to support a charity.	consecration; Memorial Acclamation;
Multiplication of the Loaves (John 6:1-13) Psalm 34:9	With a partner practice receiving Holy Communion. Write about ways of sharing. Create a homepage for a made-up club dedicated to sharing. Home and Family Discuss ways in which each family member can do better at sharing. Share something as a family with someone in need.	Communion Rite: the Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace, Breaking of the Bread, Communion
The Washing of the Disciples' Feet (John 13:4-9, 12-15) Galatians 5:13 John 12:26	Identify how people love and serve the Lord. Write about or draw ways of serving at home, at school, or at the parish. Create and hand out service coupons to be redeemed for acts of kindness. Home and Family Discuss how the parish serves others and how the family can serve others, too.	Prayer After Communion; Concluding Rites; Blessing; Dismissal
Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts (Luke 14:7-14) Luke 22:19	Write about or draw what you remember about celebrating the Sacrament of Eucharist. Write about how you will glorify the Lord by your life. Home and Family Talk about what the Eucharist means to each family member. Discuss how the Eucharist makes the family better disciples.	Mystagogy Luke 14:7-14

Components and Features of *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise*



Student Editions English

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise Primary

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise Intermediate

Student Edition Bilingual (Spanish)

Eucaristía: Damos gracias y alabanza Bilingual Primary

Each of the student texts follows the same lesson process:

- **Invitation** Life experience to introduce the chapter theme
- **Scripture** Scripture as the basis for the doctrinal content
- **Development** Church's teaching on the Eucharist and the Mass
- **Application** An activity for the children to apply what they have learned to their own lives
- **Prayer** A group prayer related to the theme of the chapter
- **Home and Family** A connection to family with home activities

Each text contains a special eighth session. The children gather after the celebration of the Sacrament for a mystagogical reflection—a liturgical catechesis which aims at deepening the child's understanding of the Sacrament. The *National Directory for Catechesis* calls for this catechesis when it states the following as part of the sacramental catechesis: "Enables the believer to reflect on the meaning of the sacrament received by implementing a thorough experience of *mystagogia* following the celebration" (NDC 35B).

Each text includes: ***A Little Catechism*** which provides summaries of Church doctrine, the Mass and the Rite of Penance, tips on living a Christian life, and prayers to know; a **Glossary** of new words; and lyrics for the RCL Benziger *Eucharist* music CD. Each of the lessons of the student texts contains many of the following special features: **Parish Connection, Catholic Practices, This We Believe, We Celebrate, Word of God** and **Let's Talk**.

Catechist Editions (English and Bilingual) For each student edition there is a full catechist edition with reduced student pages, full teaching notes, and additional black line masters of activities.

Program Director's Guide This resource provides the program director background and practical suggestions, and tools for implementing the program, forming the catechists, involving the parish, and connecting to families.

Music CD Music in English and Spanish has been chosen from contemporary liturgical music.

Models for Using *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise*



Parishes all over the country are experimenting with new ways to prepare children for the celebration of the Sacraments. A common denominator among the varying approaches is the need for family involvement in the preparation of the children. This family component is strongly recommended by the bishops. The *National Directory for Catechesis* clearly states:

Children's preparation for first reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child's understanding of the Eucharist. Children who participate with their family in the Mass experience the Eucharistic mystery in an initial way and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer" (*National Directory for Catechesis* 36A3.3a).

There are many ways to prepare children for the celebration of the Sacraments. RCL Benziger offers the following models for your consideration.

Traditional Classroom Model

In the parochial school or parish religious education program, Sacramental catechesis most often will take place within the setting of the regularly scheduled religion class. When this is done it is important to coordinate the use of the Sacrament texts with the presentation of the core religion curriculum. RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* has seven chapters which should be taught consecutively prior to First Eucharist. The eighth chapter is meant to be taught *after* the celebration of the Sacrament.

The families may be involved in their children's sacramental formation by taking part in meetings, practices, and liturgies. Opportunities for family involvement are increased through the use of the Home and Family pages which are sent home after each session. In addition to the children's sessions, consider bringing the children and families together for the Family Experience Days.

Family Model

The material in the children's books is taught in the home and the children and their families are brought together for four sessions as a large group gathering. See pages 75-102 of this *Program Director's Manual* for a complete outline of the four sessions. Pages 103-114 contain reproducible articles and information for families.

This model also can be effective by implementing the program in neighborhood clusters. In this mode several families gather to cover the material in the children's books. As with the single family model, opportunities for sessions with the larger parish community should be provided.

Intergenerational Model

Parents are not the only ones who can prepare their children for the Sacraments. Grandparents, older siblings, and extended family members and friends may also be included in the children's preparation. Use the Family Experience Days on pages 75-102 as an experience for the whole family. You may wish to invite and include interested parishioners in the process as well.

Whole Community Catechesis

The time of preparation of the children for First Eucharist is a perfect time to offer adult education for the whole parish.

“The witness of the Christian community—particularly the parish, family, parents, and catechists—is an important element in catechetical methodology.

“The effectiveness of catechesis depends to a great extent on the vitality of the Christian community in which it is given” (*National Directory for Catechesis* 29C).

To that end, it is important to form the whole parish community and offer opportunities to deepen the understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist for everyone in the parish.

See page 55 in this *Program Director's Guide* for ideas and suggestions for involving the whole parish. Sample Bulletin Inserts on the themes of Eucharist can be found in reproducible form on pages 58-61 of this Guide. A detailed session for the adults in the parish on the Sacrament of the Eucharist is found on pages 62-68.

The parish community should be kept updated on the children's progress toward the Sacraments. What better way than to remind parishioners that the whole parish community catechizes the children by the way they witness the Gospel and the importance of the Sacraments in their lives. Seeking to deepen their own understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist will speak volumes to the young people of the parish.

Roles of the Family, the Catechist, and the Parish



Role of the Family

“Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children.⁷²⁷ They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith” (*National Directory for Catechesis* 54).

The role of the family in the religious formation of a child is both a privilege and a duty. At Baptism the family speaks for the children and asks entrance into the Church. The role that the family plays in Baptism is continued in the celebration of the Sacrament of Eucharist. It is important to integrate the family into the Sacrament preparation at all stages.

At the end of each lesson in the student book, there is a Home and Family page which is sent home with the student. This page contains a note to the family about what the child learned in the lesson, questions for discussion at home, and some activities to reinforce the lesson. Family Experience Days are another way in which this program integrates the family.

Role of the Catechist

The role of the catechist is to be a guide for the child. The catechist seeks not only to teach the child the necessary knowledge for the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, but also helps the child to grow in a relationship with God.

Role of the Parish

The whole parish community shares responsibility for the religious education of the children. This is evident in the preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This Sacrament is central to Christian life, and it is the parish’s duty to convey the importance of the Eucharist to the children and their families.

Use the suggested parish bulletin announcements and inserts found on pages 56-51 to keep the parish informed and involved.

⁷²⁷ Cf. CCC, nos. 2222-2226.

A Director's Work Is Never Done!



Use the following list of tasks as a guide for planning your parish sacramental preparation program. Under “Date,” fill in the target date for finishing the task. When it’s done, put a check mark in the “Done” column and breathe a sigh of relief!

Note: It is presumed that some of these tasks may have been done prior to the preparation program for First Penance and Reconciliation.

Task	Date	Done
Before the program begins:		
• Read through the Student Edition and Catechist Edition of <i>Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise</i> .		
• Read through the <i>Program Directors Manual</i> and tab the material that you will use as you plan your program.		
• Meet with your Sacrament preparation team to do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the date for the celebration of First Communion. • Decide on the model(s) for Sacrament preparation that best fits your parish. (See pages 15-16 in this manual for suggested models.) 		
• Schedule the sessions for the children and/or sessions for parents and children. Reserve the parish facilities.		
• Publicize the program in the parish.		
• Hold registration for the program.		
• Conduct family interviews. (See page 22 of this manual.)		
• Place an order with RCL Benziger for <i>Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise</i>		
Primary _____ Student _____ Catechist Intermediate _____ Student _____ Catechist Bilingual _____ Student _____ Catechist Music CD _____		
• Recruit catechists and conduct an orientation session. (See pages 31-37 of the manual.) Copy the articles and bibliography for your catechists. (See pages 38-51 in this guide.)		
• Send a welcome letter to each family. (See page 21 of this manual.)		
• Schedule the Family Experience Days if these are to be a part of your program. (See pages 76-102 of this manual.)		
• Schedule the Parish Enrichment Session if this is to be a part of your program. (See pages 62-68 in this manual.)		
• Form a team to assist with the planning and implementation of the Family Experience Days and the Parish Enrichment Session. Meet with your team to plan each session.		

Task	Date	Done
After the program is underway:		
• Use the bulletin announcements to inform the parish about the program. (See pages 50-51 in this manual.)		
• Copy the bulletin inserts and arrange for them to be inserted into the parish bulletin. (See pages 52-55 of this manual.)		
• Copy handouts needed for each of the Family Experience Days and the Parish Enrichment Session.		
• Meet with the pastor, parish liturgists, musicians, and team members to plan the celebration of First Communion.		
After the celebration of First Eucharist:		
• Invite the children back for the eighth session (mystagogy) as outlined in their books.		
• Invite the children and their families to a Family Experience Day to reflect back on the experience of the Sacrament of Eucharist. This is part of the mystagogy on the Sacrament. (See pages 89-94 of this manual.)		



Program Evaluation



Use the following model to create evaluation forms to distribute during the Family Experience Days, the Catechist Formation sessions, and the Parish Enrichment session.

In an effort to improve our program, please comment on the following.

- **Scheduling:** Was the session conveniently scheduled?

- **Hospitality:** Were the participants made to feel welcome?

- **Environment:** Was the environment (room, seating, temperature, etc.) conducive to learning? _____

- **Format:** Was enough time/too much time given for the session? Was the pace appropriate? _____

- **Presentation:** Was the presentation effective in content, style, and delivery? _____

- **Prayer:** Were the prayer session(s) reflective? inviting? worshipful?

- **Relevance:** Did the session sufficiently address the topic?

- **Please add other comments and suggestions.**

Family Letter



Dear Family,

An exciting and important event lies ahead for your child and for you. He or she will be celebrating the Sacrament of Eucharist this year. As your child prepares to celebrate the Sacrament, you, too, have a role to play. At Baptism you spoke for your child and promised to bring him or her up in the faith. This duty includes not only the daily example you give of Christian living, but it also presumes your presence on your child's journey to First Communion.

Your child will be using RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* to prepare for this Sacrament. There are a number of ways for you to share in your child's preparation. At the end of each chapter, he or she will bring home a page entitled Home and Family. This page consists of four parts:

- **Family Note** is a brief explanation about what your child learned in the chapter.
- **On Your Own** suggests an activity for your child to do individually that relates to the material in the chapter. Encourage him or her to do the activity.
- **With Your Family** is an activity that your family can do together to reinforce your child's learning.
- **Family Chat** suggests a topic for family discussion.

With your guidance and with the support of the entire faith community, your child's celebration of First Communion will be an enriching experience for everyone. Please contact me if you have any questions or ideas to share during this important preparation time.

Sincerely,

Note: Give this letter to students' families at registration time, or send it home.

Family Interview



Purpose

The purpose of the family interviews is twofold. First, it allows the child and his or her family to meet someone from the parish catechetical staff in an informal setting and to express any needs, concerns, or questions about the process. Second, it allows the parish catechetical staff a chance to get to know the children and their families, to review what is expected of them, to ask for their commitment to the process, and to address any special needs that may be present. The interviews should be conducted in a relaxed, informal, and private setting. The atmosphere should feel welcoming.

Who Is Involved

Each family with a child preparing for the Sacraments should be interviewed. The child should definitely be present with his or her family. The interview may be conducted by the pastor, program director, or catechist. If the family is uncomfortable conversing in English, bilingual interpreters should be provided.

Sample Questions

Prepare beforehand a list of questions to ask the children and a separate list of questions for parents. State the questions in your own words and listen carefully to their responses. Avoid the impression of giving a test.

Sample Questions for Children What is your favorite subject in school? What kinds of things do you like to do on the weekends? Are you looking forward to celebrating the Sacrament of Eucharist? Do you have any questions about it? Do you know any prayers by heart? Do you know any stories about Jesus? What is your favorite? Is there anything you would like to know about the preparation class for First Communion?

Sample Questions for Parents Have you been in the parish long? What would you like your child to understand about the Sacrament of Eucharist? Are there any special needs your child has that need to be addressed in the program? Would you be interested in learning more about the Sacraments? Do you have any questions about what is expected of your child? Would you be interested in helping with the program in some way?

RCIA and Sacrament Preparation



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the Church’s process for preparing adults and children of catechetical age to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It contains the vision of Christian initiation. Moreover, it is the model for all catechesis (see *General Directory for Catechesis* 59, 90-91). Thus the RCIA has much to say to us regarding Sacramental catechesis. Furthermore, unbaptized children (and some baptized) who present themselves for the Sacraments participate in the RCIA. It is essential that you read the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (also see article 2). Here is a very brief overview.

Journey of Conversion: Leading to Paschal Mystery

The RCIA is a journey of conversion which incorporates candidates into the mystery of Christ. The RCIA is a faith-filled journey where candidates learn the Christian way of life. It is like an apprenticeship. The journey culminates with the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Periods and Rites of the RCIA

The RCIA is a process that includes periods of formation as well as the celebration of rites. Each period of formation has a different purpose. The formation process is gradual and complete. It begins with evangelization, then suitable catechesis, spiritual reflection, and finally mystagogy.

In particular, mystagogical reflections after the reception of the Sacraments are an important element of all sacramental catechesis. Mystagogy helps children better understand the Sacraments they have celebrated.

The liturgical rites are the cornerstones of the entire process. They mark the progress of the candidates, as well as form them in the faith.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do children in the RCIA receive all three Sacraments of Initiation?

The Church holds the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation as preeminent. Children of catechetical age have “attained the use of reason” and are capable of a personal faith. They must receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the same celebration (see *Code of Canon Law*, canons 852, 866). They must be confirmed, unless a grave reason prevents it.

Should children in the catechumenate process be in the parish Religious Education program?

Discern the needs of the child to determine what is best for her or him. The typical religious education (RE) program is designed for baptized, catechized Catholic children. In most circumstances the typical RE program would not be appropriate for an unbaptized, uncatechized child. However, some children want to be in the parish RE program and do quite well, particularly if they are younger.

The RCIA With Children and Youth

Children in the parish mean children celebrating Sacraments. In today's diverse and transitory society, we have children in all different stages and phases of faith development. Most parishes have children of catechetical age who are unbaptized, older baptized children who have not received Eucharist, and many other variations of Sacramental need and readiness.

The RCIA With Children and Youth meets the needs of some of those children. It is primarily for:

- unbaptized children who have attained the use of reason (see RCIA 252)
- children baptized in another Christian Church who seek full communion into the Catholic Church (see RCIA 400).
- some children who were baptized as infants in the Roman Catholic Church, “but did not receive further catechetical formation” (see RCIA 400).

Although there are many different types and categories of children in the parish, it is important to integrate the children and have a holistic approach to Sacramental ministry with children. Children who are in the RCIA must also interact with their peers “who are already baptized and are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist” (RCIA 254).

Consider the following when making plans for the RCIA With Children and Youth and Sacrament preparation for the baptized:

- Form the RCIA group for children and youth (see RCIA 255).
- Some of the catechetical formation you do with children preparing for Confirmation, Eucharist, and Penance and Reconciliation might also be appropriate for children in catechumenate (see RCIA 19).
- Most traditional religious education programs are designed for baptized, catechized Roman Catholic children.
- Sponsoring families help integrate RCIA families into the parish community.

Collaboration between Religious Education, RCIA, and Youth Ministry will make for good Sacrament preparation for all the parish children.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the RCIA With Children and Youth

The Church desires that the baptized celebrate Penance and Reconciliation, the Sacrament of pardon and peace, as often as possible. One of the most important times to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is prior to receiving First Communion. All baptized children in the RCIA are to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation prior to their reception into the Church and the celebration of Eucharist. Baptized Catholics are to receive the Sacrament prior to receiving Eucharist (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1457).

In addition, the unbaptized children in the RCIA would receive catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, but they do not receive the Sacrament as they are not yet baptized. Baptism is the primary Sacrament of conversion and forgiveness of sin. Penance and Reconciliation is not celebrated until after Baptism.

Moreover, catechesis on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is important for all the children in the RCIA. Certainly, God's call to conversion through Jesus Christ is part of "suitable catechesis" that children in the catechumenate receive (see RCIA, 75). Jesus' teaching on repentance and the forgiveness of sin would also be part of their formation in the Christian way of life.

Catechesis on all the Sacraments would be part of the children's RCIA with children and youth. Baptized children would receive catechesis for the immediate reception of the Sacrament, whereas the unbaptized children would be catechized for a more remote celebration of Penance and Reconciliation.

For baptized children in the RCIA, preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation includes celebration of a penitential rite(s). Found in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (nos. 291–303 and 459–472), the penitential rites foster a spirit of deeper conversion and prepare the candidates for the later celebration of the Sacrament. Similarly, the unbaptized children celebrate the Scrutinies (see RCIA 141ff and 291–303), which have prayers of exorcism not appropriate for the baptized.

You will find that the preparatory catechesis on Penance and Reconciliation found in this program would be suitable and helpful for children in the RCIA. Have children from the RCIA join with children from the Religious Education program, but remember to honor the distinctions between the baptized and the unbaptized.

The Role of the Family in the RCIA With Children and Youth

The RCIA with children and youth is a journey of conversion. By hearing the Good News and living in the midst of the Christian community, the child deepens her or his relationship with the living God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's pretty big stuff! Thus parents need to be involved when their child is undertaking such a serious, life-changing journey.

Indeed the Church asks conversion of the children (see RCIA 253), and this conversion affects the entire family. Family systems theory, as well as plain old common sense, tells us that when one member of the family undergoes a change, the entire family unit is affected.³ Therefore if at all possible, parents walk alongside the child on the faith journey.

Another reason parents are to be involved in the process is that often they themselves have been away from Church and need to be re-evangelized. The parents may also be inquiring in the RCIA. Frequently, parents need as much formation as the child. Although the process focuses on the child, “the formation they receive depends . . . on the influence of their parents” (see RCIA 254). Furthermore, “[the] period of initiation will also provide a good opportunity for the family to have contact with priests and catechists and other members of the parish (RCIA 254.2). Initiation is not just a matter of welcoming and forming an individual child; it is a matter of welcoming an entire family unit.

Here are some of the ways parents and family members can be involved in the process of initiation:

- Parents and siblings participate in catechumenal sessions which are intergenerational in design. The family sessions given in this *Program Director's Manual* offer a good example.
- Parents present their children at the various rites of initiation, including giving testimony on behalf of their child.
- Parents participate in the preparation sessions and mystagogical sessions for the rites.
- Parents assist in discernment by giving input in pastoral interviews and family discussions.
- Parents serve as first catechist and role model by worshipping, praying, and serving in the community.

For parents who cannot be involved in the process, “their place should be taken by ‘sponsors’”(RCIA 260). Having family sponsors even when parents are involved in the process is a great way to evangelize and build community.

³For an overview of family systems theory see Roberta M. Gilbert, M.D., *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1992).

Guidelines for Discernment in the RCIA With Children and Youth

One of the most important issues in the RCIA with children and youth is discernment. Discernment on several different levels is necessary.

Discerning Who Belongs in the RCIA Process

An initial pastoral interview with the family is very important. It is an opportunity to get to know the family and begin to build a trusting relationship. Discuss why the child and the parents seek the Sacraments. What is their religious history? What does the child know of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church? This information will help you and parents discern together whether the RCIA is what the child needs. If the child is baptized Catholic, she or he may only need Sacramental catechesis. Also, this is a time to convey the parish expectations and to briefly describe the RCIA.

Discerning What Type of Catechetical Formation Is Needed

Each child seeking the Sacraments has a unique background and different catechetical needs. The uncatechized children need an extended period of evangelization. Catechized children need less time. Some children may prefer to participate in the parish religious education program in addition to the RCIA. Older children need to be connected with parish youth ministry. All catechumens, and usually baptized candidates, participate in the dismissal at Mass followed by dismissal catechesis (see RCIA 75.3).

Discerning Who Is Ready for the Major Liturgical Rites of the RCIA, Including the Sacraments of Initiation

The Church gives fairly clear prerequisites for advancement through each of the periods of the RCIA. You may attain discernment through pastoral interviews or by giving parents discernment questions to discuss with the child at home. Some parishes also design a group process with sponsors, godparents, and catechists giving testimony. Study the Rite closely to better understand what the Church is looking for in each period.

Prior to the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, the pre-requisite is: initial conversion has taken place as evidenced by the beginnings of a spiritual life and prayer life; fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root; and initial conversion (see RCIA 42).

Prior to the Rite of Election (election indicates readiness for Sacraments), there is conversion of mind and action, and acquaintance with Christian teaching (see RCIA 120).

Using Music in Sacrament Preparation



Music is an important part of any Sacrament preparation program. Children are engaged through all of their senses. A program preparing children for the Sacraments should be rich in sensory stimulation. Children respond to visual images such as illustrations and photographs. They respond to gestures and touch, such as signings, laying on of hands, a handshake as a sign of peace, or an anointing with oil. They respond to a lighted candle, the smell of incense, and the sound of music.

RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* provides a music CD which is an integral part of the program. The CD contains a repertoire of music that is used in many parishes. It is hoped that the children will learn music that is currently being used in their parish.

The music CD is composed of 16 songs with vocals. It also contains an instrumental version of the songs. The music on the CD is in English, Spanish, and bilingual in order to serve parishes with various needs. The music lyrics are found in both the student and the catechist editions.

The following are suggestions for making the best use of the music CD:

- Listen to all of the selections on the CD. Decide which songs might enhance or support the focus of a particular session or closing prayer.
- Play the vocal rendition of the song to help the children learn the lyrics.
- Use the instrumental version to gather the class or for prayer. This will help them become familiar with the melody.
- Encourage the children to memorize the lyrics. They can enter into prayer better if they do not have to use lyric sheets.
- Begin by having the children sing only the refrain of a song. Have a cantor sing the verses.
- Encourage the children to sing the bilingual or Spanish versions found on the CD.
- Make up gestures for the refrain of the song.

Select music the children have been learning in their sessions for the celebration of First Holy Communion. Involve your parish music minister in the planning of the Mass. If the music is picked in advance, the children and their families will have the opportunity to learn the songs before First Communion.

Consider involving other children in the music ministry for the First Communion liturgies. Older siblings or friends may be encouraged to be a part of a children's choir for the liturgies.

Eucharist

We Give Thanks and Praise

Forming the Catechists

In his Providence, God has chosen to use human instruments to ensure the growth of the faith received in Baptism. Under the prayerful intercession of the Virgin Mary, who was herself both a disciple and a catechist, members of the Church community are called not only to grow in knowledge of the faith but, at the same time, to pass on that faith to others.

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Catechist Orientation Session on Eucharist



Purpose

The purpose of this gathering is to encourage the catechists to broaden their understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The gathering provides an opportunity for the catechists to deepen their appreciation for the Eucharist, and in so doing, to pass on that appreciation to the children.

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for catechists who will be working with the children and their families.

Scheduling

This session should be offered before the children begin their preparation for First Eucharist.

Environment

Participants should experience a warm, inviting environment when they arrive. A prayer table should be set up in the front or center of the room. Cover the table with a cloth reflecting the liturgical season, and place on it symbols of Eucharist such as bread, wheat, wine, and grapes, along with a crucifix and Bible or Lectionary. If possible place the Paschal candle next to the table.

- Set up the room for small groups, either using tables for five to eight people or chairs arranged in small circles.
- Nametags and light refreshments should be available as the catechists arrive.

Advance Preparation

- Be sure the leader is familiar with the prayer service and is at ease in her or his role. Invite volunteers to read the petitions and proclaim the Scripture. Allow readers time to prepare.
- Prepare the handout for the Getting to Know You activity.
- Make arrangements for light refreshments.

Materials Needed

- Nametags and markers
- Bible or Lectionary
- Handouts for opening activity, prayer, and Litany
- Refreshments

Outline of the Session

The following is a suggested order for the session. Make necessary adjustments to meet the needs of the participants.

Gathering and Getting to Know You Activity
Formal Welcome and Overview
Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as Sacrament of Unity
Presentation: Eucharist as Sacrament of Initiation
Small Group Sharing: Baptism
Break
Small Group Sharing: Personal encounters with Jesus
Presentation: Eucharist as encounter with Christ
A look at the children's texts and catechist editions
Prayer
Closing

Gathering and Getting to Know You Activity

Greet catechists warmly when they arrive and invite them to make their own nametags. Encourage people to participate in the opening activity.

Prepare a handout with various statements such as, *My name begins with W. I came to the United States from another country. My favorite sport is baseball. I work in a service profession. I have been a catechist for over five years. I was born in this parish.*

Distribute the handouts as the catechists arrive, and invite them to find people in the room who match the statements. The identified person should write his or her name next to the appropriate statement.

Formal Welcome and Overview

Welcome everyone and thank them for attending. Present a brief overview and expectations for the session. Explain that this gathering will focus on the Eucharist as a Sacrament of unity, a Sacrament of initiation, and a Sacrament of an encounter with Christ.

Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as Sacrament of Unity

Invite the participants in small groups to discuss how the opening activity encouraged people to know a little more about each other. Tell them that they might use a similar exercise with the children to build unity in their groups. Ask them to respond to the following or similar questions. (Project or have copies of the questions for each group.)

- Who did you meet that you didn't know?
- What new things did you discover about the people you talked to?
- How are they similar to you?
- What does everyone have in common?

Presentation

After spending time in discussion, ask for a few responses from the groups. Focus on the response to the question, *What do we all have in common?* Answers will vary, but attempt to draw out comments such as “our faith in Jesus,” “our sharing of Eucharist,” “our love of God and one another,” and “we are all catechists in this parish.”

When we come together to praise and thank God, we have a common experience from which to build unity and mutual understanding. In Eucharist we are one Body. Make the point that when we gather for Eucharist, though we are diverse, we are united in worship of our God. When we receive Communion, we are in communion with Christ and with one another. Eucharist begins as people are gathering.

Eucharist as Sacrament of Initiation

Segue into the next part of the presentation by pointing out that another thing we have in common is our Baptism.

Small Group Sharing

Invite participants to share Baptism stories.

- What family stories of Baptism do you remember?
- What is the most memorable Baptism you have attended and why?
- What meaning does Baptism have for you?

Allow about ten minutes for discussion, then continue the presentation. Talk about Baptism as a call from God to enter fully into the life of Christ. Baptism initiates us into the Church, and in Baptism we die to sin and rise to new life (see Romans 6:4). Through Baptism we are called to respond to God's new life and we celebrate Eucharist as a sign of our faith. Use examples from everyday life to make the point. For instance, “dying to sin” can mean trying to do one's best to resist doing what we know to be wrong even though it involves giving up something that can be very attractive and appealing. “Rising to new life” means that the fullness of God's presence comes to us in Baptism, just as the fullness of life comes to an infant born into a family. We are strengthened in our baptismal call through the Holy Spirit, given to us first in Baptism and then more fully in the Sacrament of Confirmation. We live out our baptismal call and strengthen it every time we participate in the Eucharist. Eucharist completes our initiation into the Church, and we continue to live as initiated members all the days of our life.

Tell the catechists that the children's text begins with a chapter on the Sacraments of Initiation and a strong tie between Baptism and Eucharist.

Break

Invite participants to enjoy some refreshments and conversation with each other. Encourage them to talk to folks they don't already know.

Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as a Sacrament of Encounter with Christ

Suggest that there are many ways in which we encounter God and Jesus in our lives. Give brief examples from your own life. For instance, we may be aware of God's presence when we are in a place that is special to us, such as a hiking trail, a beach, a garden or park, or a beautiful room. We may encounter Jesus when we experience a smile, a kind word, an encouraging hug, or a generous gift of time from someone who loves us as Jesus does. When we pray, when we listen to beautiful music, when we laugh, when we reach out in forgiveness to another person, when we are touched by poetry, and when we encounter someone who needs our care and love, we encounter Jesus.

Invite participants to share how they have encountered Jesus through people they know, places that are special to them, or events that have great meaning in their lives.

Large Group Sharing: Making Connections

Ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group either what they shared or what someone in their group shared.

Make the connection between encountering Jesus in these many ways and the unique encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. As the community gathers to worship, we encounter Christ in one another. We listen to God's Word and encounter Jesus speaking to us through the Word proclaimed. The presider represents Christ, gathering us in prayer to remember the common story of our Salvation. Christ comes to us as his very Body and Blood in the consecrated bread and wine of Eucharist. Thus we are nourished by the bread and enlivened by the wine that is truly the presence of Christ. This mystery of faith is one we experience with each other when we gather at Mass to thank and praise God for the gift of Jesus. As a community of faith, we are strengthened and given life through our encounters with Jesus. We become the Body of Christ when we eat the bread and drink the wine that is Jesus' living presence among us. All of these themes are explored in the children's books.

Review the student books and the catechist edition.

Distribute the books and allow time for the catechists to look through them. Ask them to pay particular attention to the themes developed in the books. Point out the Scripture stories in each chapter. Encourage them to present the Scripture in a variety of ways—drama, choral reading, mime as the passage is narrated—anything to fully engage the children in the Scripture.

Point to the section *A Little Catechism*. Remind the catechists that they should be referring the children to that section during every session.

Encourage the catechists to use the music CD, especially if the music for the First Eucharist celebrations is selected from the music provided. Each chapter offers a suggestion for music appropriate for the chapter theme and group prayer.

Go over any further instructions you have for the catechists. Will there be family interviews? When will practices take place? How will the First Communion be scheduled?

Prayer Experience

Announce the start of the prayer time by ringing a small bell, playing some background music, or by some other creative means. Invite participants to sit quietly and focus their thoughts on God's presence here and now. Allow time for the group to quiet down. Then invite everyone to stand and begin the prayer. (Give the leader and readers a copy of the prayer and Litany.)

Conclusion

Following the prayer, thank the catechists for their presence and encourage them to stay for a while for socializing.



Do This in Remembrance of Me

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Almighty God,
you sent your Son to be with us in our struggles, in our joys,
and in all the everyday events that make up our lives.
We thank you for Jesus,
for his gift of himself in Holy Communion.
We ask you to bless us today
as we have shared ourselves with one another.
Bless the children and their families
that we will be preparing for First Eucharist.
Give us the guidance of your Holy Spirit.
We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us now open our ears and our hearts to hear God's Word.

Reader: A reading from the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

(Proclaim 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Silent Reflection

Note: A brief Scripture reflection can be offered at this time, focusing on how we live out the Eucharist in our everyday lives by helping those who need our help, by being peacemakers, by being patient and kind, and by remembering the message of Jesus to love one another.

Litany of Thanksgiving

Leader: We give you thanks,
God of abundant life,
for bread and friendship and hope.
With these gifts of your grace we are nourished.
With these signs of your presence
we are able to be faithful. Amen.

Let us pray now in thanksgiving
for what God has done for us.

Please respond, "Lord, we give you thanks and praise."

Reader: For all that is beautiful in the world.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the happiness you have brought to our lives.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the Earth, and for our brothers and sisters all over the world.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the children and their families that are preparing to receive you
in communion.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For calling us to do this holy work.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Leader: Please add your prayers of thanksgiving. (Pause to allow participants
time to offer their prayers.)

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Leader: Christ comes to us in Holy Communion, and remains with us to
nourish us in faith, hope, and love. Let us pray together the prayer
Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

Leader: Let us go in peace to praise, thank, love, and serve God and
one another.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sacraments

by Sister Catherine Dooley, O.P.



The Sacramental celebrations of the children in the parish are always special days because they mark milestones in the child's life of faith and point to the growth of the child from infancy to childhood to the teenage years to adulthood. The celebration of Sacramental rites is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Sacraments and on the roles various people, particularly parents, play in preparation and celebration.

The school or parish may provide the immediate preparation, but it is the parents who have been readying their children for a long time. The lived experience of the family makes a deeper impression than the concepts learned in a textbook because it is the ordinary everyday actions that are the foundation of Sacramental life. The child comes to know God's love through love expressed in the family.

In the context of the liturgy, when we give thanks, when we ask pardon, when we praise, these words have meaning because of the actual experiences of thanking, forgiving, and affirming that take place in family life.

Sacramental Actions

Children love stories. Stories from the life of Jesus told again and again in the catechetical sessions are foundational to faith, and they prepare the children for the liturgical proclamation of the Gospel. Tracing the cross on the forehead of a child before he or she enters or leaves the classroom teaches him or her the meaning of the cross as the sign of God's love and care and develops a child's sense of identity as a baptized Christian. Even if the child may not yet be able to articulate meaning, the action provides an intuitive way of knowing that is foundational for reflection and integration in the future.

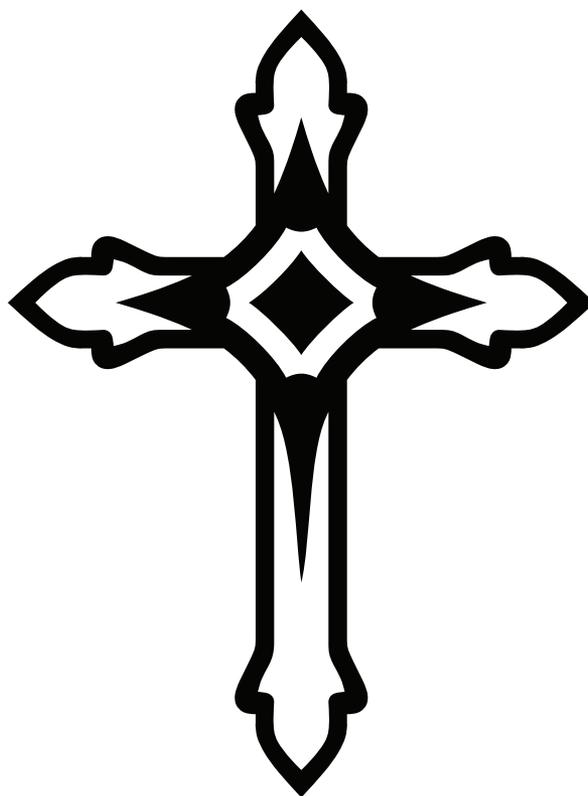
Sacraments are about relationships with God and with one another. Sometimes we place so much focus on our part in the celebration that we forget that Sacraments are God's actions in our lives. Liturgy has special significance as a way of relating to God or responding to God's relating to us. It is important to help children realize that the purpose of a Sacrament is to give worship and praise to God, to grow in holiness, and to build up the Reign of God.

Each Sacrament is not limited to the moment of celebration but is lived out in the future and is in continuity with all that has gone before. Anyone who is married would not say that their wedding day is their marriage; rather, it is the beginning of a day-to-day commitment throughout the years that is

their marriage. Nor did the couple decide they loved each other on the day of the wedding; that happened long before. So it is with all Sacraments. Our actual Baptism may have been a long time ago; yet to be a Christian is to continually live out the meaning of the baptismal promises in daily life. With children (and others) it is important to stress that sacramental celebration an ongoing part of their lives.

A Call to Action

Because the Sacraments involve more than the moment of celebration, each of the Sacraments calls us to action. As children, when we fought on the way home from Mass, our mother would often say, “Well, the Mass didn’t do you much good!” One purpose of the Sacraments is to build up the Reign of God. If we are reconciled in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, then we are called to be reconcilers. The Eucharist commissions us to go in peace to glorify the Lord by our lives. The Sacraments achieve their effect when they take root in our lives and move us to a greater service of God and neighbor. The question that we might ask the children and ourselves is: “What does this Sacrament ask of me?”



Celebrate the Eucharist

by Sister Catherine Dooley, O.P.



Celebrations mark important moments in our lives, such as birthdays, graduations, births, marriages, anniversaries, or promotions. When we reflect on these events, we see that there are certain basic similarities. The event being celebrated, such as our birth or anniversary, is one that happened in the past, is celebrated in the present, and is a threshold to the future. We use gathering, gifts, words, and actions as visible, concrete ways to point to and to make present the invisible and intangible realities of love and friendship.

The Sunday Eucharistic celebration includes these same elements. The Christian people come together every week on the Lord's Day, to remember ". . . the passion, the resurrection, and the glorification of the Lord Jesus . . ." (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 106). The Resurrection is not simply a past event in the life of Jesus but, through the Resurrection, Jesus became present and continues to be present in our lives. On Sunday we remember and retell that saving story in words and actions. In so doing we come to know the Lord anew and to identify ourselves as a resurrection people who live out the mystery of death and resurrection in our everyday lives. Through our being gathered together, through the proclamation of the Word, through the sharing of the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, we give thanks and praise to God for Jesus Christ's presence in our midst and for the action of the Spirit in our lives. Through the ritual action we are led to an awareness of the reality of God's faithful love revealed in Jesus the Christ, celebrated within a community of believers whose Baptism binds us to Christ and to one another.

The Eucharistic celebration consists of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist; two parts that are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship (see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 28). The Scripture readings are not just stories about God and God's relationship with humankind. Rather, in the Word proclaimed, God speaks to us and calls us to respond to God's loving presence in our lives.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows the fourfold action of Christ at the Last Supper: take, bless, break, eat and drink. Just as Christ's action of taking, blessing, breaking and giving to his disciples were different aspects of one action and one prayer, so, too, do the parts of our Eucharistic prayer form one continuous prayer.

At the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts that precedes the Eucharistic Prayer, the same elements of bread and wine that Christ used are brought to the altar. The purpose of this rite is to prepare the altar, the gifts, and the community for the Eucharistic liturgy. The rite previously was called the Offertory Rite but offertory sometimes led to misunderstandings since the offertory takes place within and not before the Eucharistic Prayer. Moreover, Preparation of the Altar and Gifts more accurately describes what is happening. The prayers said are modeled on Jewish table prayers of thanksgiving, praising God the Creator through whose goodness we are to able to offer the bread which the Earth has given and human hands have made. The bread and wine, symbolizing our world, our life and our dependence upon God, are presented in terms of what they become in the Eucharistic action: “bread of life” and “our spiritual drink.”

At the Last Supper, Christ gave thanks and praise and the whole of the Eucharist Prayer is one of thanksgiving and praise. The Preface, an integral part of the Eucharistic Prayer, initiates the thanksgiving and praise which pervades the whole of the Eucharistic prayer. The priest, standing *before God* and the assembly invites us to “lift up [our] hearts” and join our prayer to his. The main part of the Preface focuses on a particular aspect of Salvation History or on the special feast or season being celebrated. It is concluded with the acclamation, “Holy, Holy, Holy” in which we join with all of creation and the Communion of Saints in giving praise to God through Christ.

Calling upon the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), the Church prays that not only the gifts might become the Body and Blood of Christ but that through the Holy Spirit, we the assembly may also be changed, become one Body of Christ, and “a living sacrifice . . . to the praise of [God’s] glory” (Eucharistic Prayer IV).

At the center of the Eucharistic Prayer is the institutional narrative that contains the words of consecration. At the Last Supper, Christ offered his Body and Blood to the Apostles in the form of bread and wine: “This is my Body, which is given up for you.” “This is the chalice of my Blood, which is poured out for you and for many . . .” “Do this in memory of me.” *For you* emphasizes the fact that Christ’s sacrificial death and Resurrection commemorated in the Eucharist is for us. “Do this in memory of me.” “In memory” means that the disciples were to reenact this Supper again and again, but the “this” means that we are to become a living sacrifice praising God by giving ourselves to others in service and just actions.

The Institution Narrative and consecration is concluded by the great acclamation in which the assembly gives thanks and praise for Christ’s Death and Resurrection and Christ’s coming again. The Church keeps the

memorial of Christ (*anamnesis*). Each of the Eucharistic Prayers names a particular aspect of Christ's saving work to be remembered. The "we remember" of the prayer is followed by "we offer." With the priest we offer Christ to the Father but we also offer our lives with all their joys and sorrows. The "we" of our prayer includes not only those present but the Church throughout the world and all those who have gone before us. The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the great acclamation of praise and thanksgiving to which we respond Amen—so be it—it is true!

The unity with Christ and with one another is the focus of the entire Communion Rite. The Lord's Prayer, the greeting of peace, and the breaking of the bread express mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. These prayers and actions acknowledge our baptismal bond signifying that we are members of the Body of Christ. ". . . [W]e, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (*1 Corinthians 10:17*). The Communion procession and song signify that Communion is an action of the community. The minister calls each person by the name: "Body of Christ" to remind us that we receive the Body of Christ and that we ourselves are the Body of Christ. In an Easter sermon, (Sermon #227) St. Augustine said, "The bread which you see on the altar, sanctified through the Word of God, is the Body of Christ . . . If you receive worthily, you are what you have received." Then he added, "Be a member of Christ's body, so that your 'Amen' may be true." In the Concluding Rites, we hear, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." We are reminded that we are the Body of Christ who are sent out to live in care and concern for others so that our *Amen* may be true.



**From all you
have given us
we bring you
these gifts.**

The Mystery of the Eucharist Mystagogy

by Sister Catherine Dooley, O.P.



“We had the experience but missed the meaning,” is a line in the T.S. Eliot poem, “Four Quartets.” Meaning is something that comes from reflecting upon an experience. It gives us an insight that raises the experience to a new level. How often have we said things like “If I knew then what I know now!” It is only when we have grasped the meaning and significance of something that we are able to appropriate that experience and be changed by it. Finding meaning is not simply the work of an individual but of a multi-generational community.

From the earliest times, the Church has sought meaning. After their Sacramental initiation, the neophytes, or newly baptized, were brought together to reflect on what they had experienced during the Easter Vigil. Cyril of Jerusalem would take them step by step through the rites they had celebrated. Bread-baking was one of St. Augustine’s favorite images to reflect on with the neophytes. It deepened their understanding of the Body of Christ into which they were incorporated at Baptism/Chrismation and which brought them to the Eucharist and to unity as the Body of Christ. The restored order of Christian Initiation today (RCIA) provides a period of post-baptismal reflection, or mystagogy (interpretation of the mystery), for today’s neophytes and for all of the baptized. The purpose is to deepen their grasp of the Paschal Mystery, to see it as part of their own life through reflection on the Gospel and doing works of charity and justice. Mystagogy is not just for the newly baptized, but is a communal form of catechesis appropriate for the whole community.

An example of mystagogy is found in one of the most beautiful stories in the Gospels: The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13–35. Jesus encounters the discouraged disciples on the road and makes himself known to them in the unfolding of Scripture and in the breaking of the bread. The disciples have had the experience of Jesus but missed the meaning. They tell their story filled with disappointment and disillusionment. Jesus tells his story by beginning with a review of the Old Testament in order to show the divine purpose in his Death on the Cross.

After sharing their stories, they gather around the table for the “breaking of the bread.”

In the silence of that gesture, the disciples come to see Jesus as the one who gives himself totally to us. Jesus disappears, but he has given them himself in a sacred act that will always be identified with him. Now the disciples begin to reflect on their own experience. They see themselves differently, they forget about their fear of darkness and they head back *toward* Jerusalem to proclaim that “The Lord has risen indeed, . . .”

In the busy world in which we live, bombarded by so many demands and responsibilities, it is more important than ever to help people find meaning and see the relationship of their faith to their life. Mystagogy primarily has to do with the Sacramental life of the community. It enables the community to reflect on their personal experience; from the Emmaus story, when and through whom have they recognized the Lord? Mystagogy explores the multiple meanings of the images of the Scripture. For example, each of the meal stories of St. Luke’s Gospel gives us insight into the multiple meanings of Eucharist. The banquet at the house of Levi in Luke 5:27–39 is preceded by other stories of conversion. The banquet story tells what it means to follow Jesus. Levi, a tax collector, was now a follower of Jesus. Now he took an active part in the ministry of Jesus. The meal was an opportunity to give others from his past life a chance to know Jesus. The story gives an insight into the Eucharist as a moment of evangelization. Those who are called to follow Jesus must preach Jesus in word and action. What does this story mean in the life of the neophyte or for any of the baptized? What does the story mean in terms of the invitation at Mass: “Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb” followed by the “Lord, I am not worthy”? In mystagogy on the Eucharist, the celebration leads to reflection, to new insights, to action. Each action of the Eucharist, particularly the Eucharistic Prayer, is a source of reflection that will lead to new meaning and renewed life.

Effective Liturgical Catechesis Using Ritual and Symbol



Preparing children for initiation into the Sacramental life of the Church requires us to focus on a number of important catechetical tasks. The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* offers us some guidance on what these tasks are. The *GDC* defines liturgical catechesis as that which “prepares for the Sacraments by promoting a deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy. This explains the contents of the prayers, the meaning of the signs and gestures, and educates to active participation, contemplation and silence” (GDC 71). This catechesis “[f]ocuses primarily on the symbols, rituals, and prayers contained in the rite for each Sacrament (NDC 35B). In speaking of catechesis on the Eucharist, the *Directory for Masses with Children* calls for the development of human values which will lead to a better understanding of Christian values. These values include community activity, exchange of greetings, the capacity to listen and to seek and grant pardon, expression of gratitude, experience of symbolic actions, a meal of friendship, and festive celebration. Summed up, all of our efforts should lead children to a conscious and active participation in the Sacraments.

For the average catechist, these tasks may seem daunting. Somehow each catechetical session must help children both understand and experience the symbols and ritual patterns of the Sacramental liturgy.

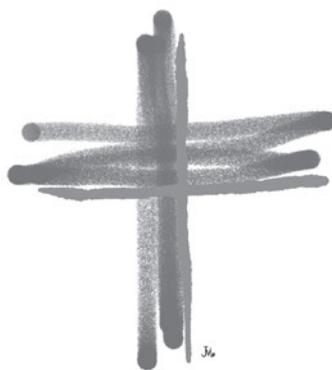
Practically, this means that we recognize that Sacraments are ritual prayer. Leading children to a conscious and active participation in liturgy means that we spend time forming their spiritual lives. Identify ritual patterns in the Sacraments. Then use them in a prayerful way to help children become comfortable with the rites. Focus on the ritual patterns and signs of gathering, listening, silent reflection, praising, thanksgiving, asking for pardon, and developing a prayerful attitude. A good catechist should build up a library of resources on ritual prayer.

We want to make sure that the children truly understand what the Church teaches and believes about the Sacraments. Experiential recall is the goal of a successful catechetical session. By creating a simple gathering prayer and having the children sign themselves with holy water to recall their Baptism, they can experience the symbols of Baptism. Asking them to renew their baptismal promises and perhaps having the children and their parents gather around the baptismal font with lighted candles, would be another way to help children experience the ritual and symbols of Baptism.

A critical ritual pattern in the Sacraments is listening to God's Word. Time should be spent on helping children, in an age-appropriate way, to become good listeners. An effective way to develop listening is to begin with developing quiet and prayerful meditation. Guided meditation with children can help. While it takes time for the children to get used to this prayer format, eventually they will become comfortable with it. Of course, using ritual prayer with God's Word also is helpful. The *Lectionary for Masses With Children* is an excellent resource for suitable Scripture texts that facilitate children's understanding.

Children are drawn naturally to ritual and gesture. The Sacraments become much more meaningful when children are invited to experience them in this way. Catechists should encourage parents to offer prayer at home. Motivate parents with prayer ideas and resources, such as *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition, RCL Benziger's *Catholic Prayers and Practices* (available in English, bilingual Spanish, French, and Polish) and *Catholic Prayers and Practices for Young Disciples* (available in English and bilingual Spanish) are valuable prayer resources for children and families.

Finally, the use of music as a catechetical tool is powerful. Children love to sing. Music is an especially effective way to catechize them. Young people should be prepared to participate fully in liturgical music. Care should be given to creating appropriate musical settings of the psalms, as well as involving young people in the Eucharistic Prayer. Catechists can use the resources on RCL Benziger's *Reconciliation: Pardon and Peace* and *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CDs.



Whatever Happened to Joy?

A Ten-Minute Retreat for Busy Catechists!

by Timothy Mullner



I can still remember her face. She had bright sparkling eyes, a perfectly ironed habit, and a knowing smile that was almost a smirk. It was as if Sister Gerald Wald, O.S.B. was in on a secret, and she couldn't wait to tell. As a sixth-grade Catholic school teacher, Sr. Gerald radiated joy as she echoed the faith to her eager group of learners. What was it that made Sr. Gerald so compelling?

The word *joy* appears in Sacred Scripture more than 315 times. Sadly, it is a word and reality that is sorely missing in today's fast-paced culture. What has happened to joy?

The Daze of Our Lives

As catechists in the United States, we find ourselves blessed to live with freedoms and prosperity. But in our attempt to keep up, to match the neighbor's lawn, or add zeros to our checking accounts, we can rush right by the real stuff of life. We tend to be so consumed with consuming that the urgent tasks of daily life make us forget the important people and things around us. We're so busy trying to *get* a life that we forget to *live* one. Such is the daze of our lives!

Here is an example. Driving to work one morning, I spied a family on their morning commute. Dad was talking on his cell phone and mom was applying makeup by the soft light of her visor mirror. In the back seat, the daughter was finishing an assignment on her laptop, while her brother was busy exercising his thumbs with a video game. Theirs was a "Little House on the Freeway"!

With every lesson plan that we prepare for adults, children, and teens, we must take great care to help folks slow down as they rush through life. By encouraging participants in our parish programs to pause and reflect through prayer, ritual action, and faith-sharing, we can help them rekindle joy and learn to inhabit the fast-paced lives they lead.

In the Image and Likeness of God!

Being busy and having stuff isn't bad. But it's in our slowing down that we remember who we are and to whom we belong. It's difficult to "echo the faith" if that fundamental truth isn't resounding in our own hearts and minds as catechists.

Sister Gerald's abundant joy came from the answers to two primordial questions. Open your Bible and read the stories of creation, the Fall, and Cain and Abel (see Genesis 1–4). Read the stories once more and notice the questions God asks: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) and “Where is Abel?” (Genesis 4:9).

Being created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26–27) reminds us that God will pursue us forever in order to help us reclaim our divine birth right. Sister Gerald's joy (and yours and mine) comes from remembering that ours is a divine inheritance. While we do have a home in Heaven, we are also meant to share life with others in the here and now. Our task is to enjoy life because God never stops asking, “Where are you?” Even with the sin of our lives, we are always welcomed back. As catechists we help the whole parish community to embrace that truth as it resounds in their hearts with healing, joy, and hope.

The joy of knowing who we are, and remembering to whom we belong, connects us to the People of God, the Church. This joy also reminds us that we go to God together. God's probing inquiry, “Where is . . . Abel?” forever bonds humanity as a family of faith.

Just as there is no perfect family, the Church—our family of faith—is not perfect. Yet joy comes in knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love (see Romans 8:35–39) and that being connected to others in the Body of Christ provides the support, forgiveness, healing, and encouragement to continue the journey of faith. As catechists filled with joy, that is a faith worth echoing!

Take Some Time to Reflect

1. Call to mind a parish catechist or Catholic school teacher from your childhood who overflowed with joy and hope. What was the source of his or her joy?
2. What *stuff* in your life takes up too much time or distracts you from slowing down and remembering who you are and to whom you belong?
3. Where do you find joy in daily life, in your family, in your ministry? Pray a prayer of gratitude for these people, places, and things.
4. What areas of your life need healing and forgiveness? How can reconciliation occur in your key relationships to renew the joy that is your divine inheritance?
5. In order to experience more joy in my life, I need/want to . . .

Now, quiet yourself and take a moment to memorize these words from Proverbs 10:28: “The hope of the just brings them joy, . . .”

Including Children with Special Learning Needs

by Susan Perault



In parish-based faith formation settings, the education of children with special needs has evolved at a very rapid pace. Once educated primarily in separate schools or segregated classrooms, children with unique learning needs now learn in age-appropriate classrooms side-by-side with their peers. Educators, in partnership with parents, collaborate in the development of distinct educational goals and unique objectives designed to take place within a typical classroom setting, tailored to maximize each child's potential.

In 1978 the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities* and said, "Parish liturgical celebrations and catechetical programs should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation according to their capacity." In May of 2005, the *National Directory for Catechesis* acknowledged, "Although providing such services is challenging to parishes and dioceses, the Church owes persons with disabilities her best efforts in order to ensure that they are able to hear the Gospel of Christ, receive the Sacraments, and grow in their faith in the fullest and richest manner possible" (NDC 49). With proper planning, a bit of dreaming and scheming, and an openness to new ways of thinking, parish-based faith formation programs can include all children, regardless of unique learning needs. Modeling the planning process used in the public school setting, the catechetical team, in partnership with parents and with the support of the parish community, can develop distinct faith-formation goals and objectives for delivery within the parish setting.

At least once every school year, parents and educational professionals are required by law to meet to review current progress, create new age-appropriate goals, and design a variety of learning objectives. As a result parents gain a wealth of knowledge about their child's unique learning needs, gleaned not only from the professionals working with their children, but from their own vast experience of daily living—caring, nurturing, and loving their children day in and day out. Parents can share this experience, this information and knowledge, with the catechetical team in the development of individualized goals and specific objectives designed to enhance the religious growth and spiritual formation of their child.

Initially, the catechetical team needs to discern by grade level the essential elements of the curriculum in which every child should participate. This effort lays the groundwork for a planning template to be used when meeting with the parents of children with unique learning needs. In partnership with the parents, decisions can be made as to which experiences, opportunities, lesson adaptations, and other services will best enhance the child's preparation process for Sacraments on an age-appropriate schedule.

As part of this planning process, ask the parents to describe their child's classroom setting and any various adaptations or equipment used in school. How each child spends the day, with whom, when, and for how long will provide many ideas, hints, and examples of how to create a nurturing learning environment within the catechetical setting. Take notes as parents describe the various accommodations provided, such as special seating, adaptive equipment, a personal aide, one-on-one tutor time, or distinct testing requirements: all indicate what accommodations and services the catechetical team can replicate in order to enhance the faith-formation experience at the parish level. This individualized religious education plan should state clearly the selected faith-formation goals and objectives, as well as how and when progress can be measured. It will be an invaluable guide and support for the entire catechetical team, the parents, the administrator, the catechist, and an aide or tutor, as well as the parish's pastoral care staff.

Be creative in your planning. Who might be called forth anew from the parish community to assist catechists with lesson preparation, the adaptation of materials, classroom management, or the provision of one-on-one tutoring time? Prayer, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, is bound to turn up new support, new involvement, and new resources, as well as new members for the parish catechetical team.

As noted in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, providing distinct services and accommodations on an individualized basis is indeed a challenge, but a challenge worth accepting. Our parish communities are not mandated by public law to include children with disabilities, but we are compelled by God's Law of Love to ensure that all are indeed welcome. Catechists should take special note of the hints and suggestions in their Catechist Editions for including all children. The feature, Special Needs, will guide the catechist in creating and promoting an atmosphere of inclusiveness for all God's children. Here are examples of the topics included in this feature:

Working with Children with ADD/ADHD
Communicating with Autistic Children
Adjusting for Mobility or Hearing Limitations
Including Everyone

Eucharist Bibliography for Catechists



Books and media for catechists can be obtained by contacting the publishers or online from barnesandnoble.com and amazon.com. For additional resources see the Eucharist Bibliography for Families on page 106.

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What Do We Do at Mass? Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

Eucharist

We Give Thanks and Praise

Involving the Parish

Some fundamental principles apply to catechesis for each of the sacraments . . . parishes should present sacramental catechesis that is [i]ntended for all members of the Christian community, takes place within the community, and involves the whole community of faith. . . .

National Directory for Catechesis 35B

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Suggestions for Involving the Whole Parish



Use the following suggestions to involve parishioners in the preparation of children for Sacrament of the Eucharist:

- Include those in the RCIA with children and youth who are preparing for the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist in all liturgies, activities, and celebrations that are part of the Sacrament preparation for First Eucharist children.
- Organize a “Getting to Know You” reception after Mass for the children and their families who will celebrate the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation and Eucharist during the year. Schedule this event to take place a week or so before the first session of the Sacrament preparation. Have the children and their families wear nametags and encourage parishioners to introduce themselves.
- Each week throughout the period of preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist include the names of various children in the program in the Prayer of the Faithful at all the Masses.
- Invite parishioners to attend the Family Experience Days that are part of the parish preparation for First Eucharist. Besides participating, they might help with hospitality, art activities, and in other useful ways.
- Display pictures of the First Eucharist children and children in the RCIA in the gathering area of the church. The pictures should be labeled clearly with each child’s first name. They should remain in place throughout the time of preparation.
- Schedule some adult formation sessions focusing on the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- Prepare a “Prayer Tree” to be located near the pictures of the First Eucharist children and children in the RCIA. Hang colorful slips of paper on the tree, each slip containing the first name of one of the children. Invite parishioners to take home one of the slips as a reminder to pray for that particular child during the time of preparation for First Communion.
- Invite the children and their families to volunteer to speak at a Mass following their First Eucharist, describing to the parish what the experience means to them as they reflect and remember.
- On a Sunday a few months following First Eucharist, organize a reunion of the children in the RCIA, the First Eucharist children, and their families. Reserve a special section in the church for them and introduce them to the assembly. Provide a place for them to gather after Mass for refreshments.

Bulletin Announcements



These parish bulletin announcements correspond to the eight chapters in the student text of RCL Benziger's Sacrament program, *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise*. Use each announcement on the Sunday before the children's session takes place. The number before each announcement refers to the chapter number in the children's book.

- 1. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Using the RCL Benziger program, *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise*, our parish children will begin this week to prepare for First Communion. The children will be discussing Baptism and the sense of belonging that comes to those who are brought into God's family through the Sacraments of Initiation. Reflect on your own life of faith and think about the importance and significance of Baptism. Please keep the children in your prayers as they prepare for First Communion.
- 2. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Our parish children who are preparing for First Eucharist will be considering ways in which gathering together for a family meal is like coming to Mass to be with God's family. Everyone is asked to take a moment at your next family meal to ponder some of its similarities to Mass and to thank God for those at the table with you. Please offer words of encouragement to our First Eucharist children and remember them in your prayers.
- 3. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** This week the children preparing for First Eucharist will consider how listening to God's Word proclaimed at Mass can help them come closer to Jesus. The children will discover how to respond to God's Word by helping others in their families and at school. How does God's Word encourage you to help others? Please discuss this question with other parishioners and together keep the children in your prayers.
- 4. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Children in our First Eucharist program will focus this week on thanking and praising God at Mass and on finding ways to express their thankfulness for the many gifts that God has given to them. All parishioners are asked to join with our First Eucharist children in prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God throughout the week.

- 5. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Remembering is the theme this week for children preparing for their First Eucharist. They will be recalling the words of Jesus, “Do this in memory of me,” as they learn about the words and actions of the consecration at Mass. Everyone is invited to ponder the great mysteries of faith that are contained in the words of consecration and to continue to pray for our First Eucharist children.
- 6. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** The children preparing for First Communion will seek to understand the significance of bread and wine as they learn how Jesus shares his very life with us in Eucharist. When you receive the Body and Blood of Christ at Communion, please take a moment to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist. Pray for the faith of the children who will soon be joining the rest of us at the Eucharistic table.
- 7. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Our parish children will be gathering this week for their last session of preparation before receiving First Communion. Soon they will be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ and will be called to glorify the Lord by their lives. In what ways are you called forth to love and serve? Who are those in your life who need your love and care? Please bless our First Communion children by your example and by offering encouragement on their First Communion Day.
- 8. Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise** Our parish children who have recently celebrated Eucharist for the first time will spend time at their last formal session remembering the significance of this event. They will be encouraged to think back and reflect on what happened on this special day, how they responded, and how God is more present to them now. How has your life been blessed and changed by this Sacrament? Please continue to include our new communicants in your prayers.



Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise

Remembering

As the parish children prepare to receive Eucharist for the first time, we are all invited to offer encouragement and support to them and to their families. Many of us can remember our First Holy Communion, and we treasure those memories. Now, after years of receiving Eucharist, we remember how we have been fed and strengthened by the living presence of Jesus in our lives.

When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we do indeed remember what Jesus did for us on the night before he died. He promised to remain with us in the ordinary forms of bread and wine so that he can continue to nourish us with his very life each time we receive Eucharist. The prayers we hear and pray at Mass help us remember his words: “Do this in memory of me.”

Families of children preparing for First Eucharist are building memories together. During this time of preparation, families are retelling the story of their child’s Baptism: who was there, how the child reacted to the water and oil, why the child’s name was chosen. Parents are sharing why they had their child baptized. These memories of Church are important to each one of us. When we remember we come to appreciate even more the wonderful gift of God’s life that comes to us in the Sacrament of Eucharist.

This week set aside some time with your family and friends or on your own to think about the following questions:

- What are some favorite stories that have been handed down in your family about Baptisms, First Communions, weddings, or funerals? What do these stories teach you about God’s goodness?
- How will your family remember you? What stories will they tell?
- What do you think God’s most meaningful gift to you might be?

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise

Unity

God has called each one of us through Baptism to participate fully in God's life and grace and to live in harmony with each other. We are united in our faith and in our basic beliefs and practices, and yet each one of us is unique and special in God's eyes. When we participate in Mass and receive Eucharist together, we live out our conviction that we are indeed the Body of Christ.

The parish children who are preparing to receive Eucharist for the first time are beginning to understand their place in the Body of Christ. Eucharist is often referred to as Holy Communion, meaning that a certain unity of faith is expected before young children are fully incorporated into the Body of Christ through the Sacrament of Eucharist. In this time of preparation, they are coming to understand and to believe in the actual presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine. Soon their "Amen" will join ours. Together, united in faith with the rest of the community, the children will receive their First Communion.

This week take some time with your family and friends or on your own to think about the following questions:

- What signs of unity of faith do you observe among members of this parish?
- What does it mean to you to be a member of the Body of Christ?
- In what ways does Eucharist unite us?

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise

Gratitude and Thanksgiving

As the parish children continue their preparation for First Eucharist, they are becoming more aware of the importance of expressing gratitude and thanksgiving to God and others. The word *Eucharist* means “giving thanks.” When we participate as a community of faith in sharing the Body and Blood of Christ, we are giving thanks to God.

All of us learn at an early age to say thank you when we are given a gift. The special gift of the Eucharist means that God’s very life is offered to us through the presence of Christ in the Body and Blood of Christ that we share. How can we, as ordinary people, adequately express our thanks to God for this holy gift? In this regard the parish children preparing for First Communion have much to teach the rest of us. Because they are young, their thanks are often quite simple and direct. They give enthusiastic hugs and they smile with delight. They sometimes make for us colorful cards or pictures with words of thanks on them. Often they speak the precious words, “Thank you.”

When we have gratitude in our hearts, we all must find ways of expressing it, as the children do. In receiving the Eucharist, we express our thanksgiving to God by allowing the importance of what we are celebrating to reach deep into our hearts. We think of the many gifts God has given to us, and we form words and attitudes of thanks. We offer God prayers of thanksgiving and praise.

This week take some time with your family and friends or on your own and think about the following questions:

- How do you express gratitude and thanks in your daily life?
- What specific gifts from God are you most thankful for?
- How do you express your thankfulness to God?

Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise

Going Forth

The parish children have celebrated their First Communion and have joined the rest of us at the table of the Eucharist. The children and their families are now reflecting on the experience of receiving Eucharist and what that special day meant to them.

This reflection on celebrating a Sacrament is called *mystagogy*. It is a long word that has a short meaning: remembering and thinking about what a Sacrament means in one's life. The First Communion children and their families will remember for years the excitement of that special day, as many of us still remember. However, in thinking about the significance of participating in Eucharist, as the Body of Christ, all of us are called to further reflection.

The last words we hear at Mass are, "*Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.*" After receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we become the Body of Christ when we love and serve him and one another. Each time we receive the sacred bread and wine, we renew our intentions to "go in peace," serving and loving God and others.

This week take some time with your family and friends or on your own and think about the following questions:

- How are you changed when you receive the Sacrament of Eucharist?
- What are some specific ways in which you can love and serve God and others this week?
- If you were to describe to a person of another faith tradition what receiving Eucharist means to you, what words would you use?

Parish Enrichment Session: Whole Community Catechesis



Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise

Purpose

The purpose of this gathering is to encourage parishioners to broaden their understanding of the Sacrament of Eucharist. The gathering provides the opportunity for parishioners to learn, pray, and share their faith, and in so doing, deepen their own appreciation for the Eucharist.

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for parishioners of all ages who wish to learn more about the Sacrament of Eucharist and its meaning in their lives.

Scheduling

This session can be offered at any point during the children's Sacrament preparation program that is convenient to the parish calendar of events. It may be held in the evening, on a Saturday morning, or on a Sunday afternoon. The suggested time frame is two hours, but it may be shortened as need be.

If possible, you may offer lunch or substantial snacks, perhaps prepared by additional parishioners as a way to involve them in the event. A potluck meal would be another nice touch, either before or after the gathering.

Environment

Participants should experience a warm, inviting environment when they arrive. A prayer table should be set up in the front or center of the room. Cover the table with a cloth reflecting the liturgical season, and place on it symbols of Eucharist, such as bread, wheat, wine, and grapes, along with a crucifix and Bible or Lectionary. If possible, place the Paschal candle next to the table.

- Conduct this session in a room that adequately accommodates a large number of people.
- Set up the room for small groups, either using tables for five to eight people or chairs arranged in small circles.
- Nametags and light refreshments should be available as people arrive.

Advance Preparation

- Be sure the leader is familiar with the prayer service and is at ease in the role of leader. Invite volunteers to read the petitions and proclaim the Scripture. Allow readers time to prepare.
- Prepare the handout for the Getting to Know You activity.
- Make arrangements for refreshments.

Materials Needed

- nametags and markers
- Bible or Lectionary
- handouts for opening activity, prayer, and Litany
- refreshments

Order of the Session

The following is a suggested order for the session. Make necessary adjustments to meet the needs of the participants.

Gathering and Getting to Know You Activity
Formal Welcome and Overview
Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as Sacrament of Unity
Presentation: Eucharist as Sacrament of Initiation
Small Group Sharing: Baptism
Break
Small Group Sharing: Personal Encounters with Jesus
Presentation: Eucharist as Encounter with Christ
Prayer
Closing



Gathering and Getting to Know You Activity

Greet participants warmly when they arrive and invite them to make their own nametags. Encourage people to introduce themselves and participate in the opening activity.

Prepare a handout with various statements such as, *My name begins with W. I came to the United States from another country. My favorite sport is baseball. I work in a service profession. I was born in this parish. My family moved to this area in the last year.*

Distribute the handout as people arrive, and invite them to find people in the room who match the statements. The identified person should write his or her name next to the appropriate statement.

Formal Welcome and Overview

Welcome everyone and thank them for attending. Present a brief overview and expectations for the session. Explain that this gathering will focus on Eucharist as a Sacrament of unity, a Sacrament of initiation, and a Sacrament of encounter with Christ.

Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as Sacrament of Unity

Invite the participants to discuss in small groups how the opening activity encouraged people to get to know each other. Ask them to respond to the following or similar questions. (Project or have copies of the questions for each group.)

- Who did you meet that you didn't know?
- What new things did you discover about the people you talked to?
- How are they similar to you?
- What does everyone have in common?

Sacrament of Initiation

After spending some time in discussion, ask for a few responses from the groups. Focus on the response to the question, *What do we all have in common?* Answers will vary, but attempt to draw out comments such as “our faith in Jesus,” “our sharing of Eucharist,” “our love of God and one another,” and “we are all members of this parish.”

When we come together to praise and thank God, we have a common experience from which to build unity and mutual understanding. In Eucharist we are one Body.

Make the point that when we gather for Eucharist, though we are diverse, we are united in worship of our God. When we receive Communion, we are in communion with Christ and with one another. Eucharist begins as people are gathering.

Presentation: Eucharist as Sacrament of Initiation

Segue into the next part of the presentation by pointing out that another thing we have in common is our Baptism.

Small Group Sharing: Baptism

Invite participants to share Baptism stories.

- What family stories of Baptism do you remember?
- What is the most memorable Baptism you have attended and why?
- What meaning does Baptism have for you?

Allow about 15 minutes for discussion, then continue the presentation. Talk about Baptism as a call from God to enter fully into the life of Christ. Baptism initiates us into the Church, and in Baptism we die to sin and rise to new life (see Romans 6:4). Through Baptism we are called to respond to God's new life and we celebrate Eucharist as a sign of our faith. Use examples from everyday life to make the point. For instance, "dying to sin" can mean trying to do one's best to resist doing what we know to be wrong even though it involves giving up something that can be very attractive and appealing. "Rising to new life" means that the fullness of God's presence comes to us in Baptism, just as the fullness of life comes to an infant born into a family. We are strengthened in our baptismal call through the Holy Spirit, given to us first in Baptism and then more fully in the Sacrament of Confirmation. We live out our baptismal call and strengthen it every time we participate in the Eucharist. Eucharist completes our initiation into the Church, and we continue to live as initiated members all the days of our life.

Break

Invite participants to enjoy some refreshments and conversation with each other. Encourage them to talk to folks they don't already know.

Small Group Sharing: Eucharist as a Sacrament of Encounter with Christ

Suggest that there are many ways in which we encounter God and Jesus in our lives. Give brief examples from your own life. For instance, we may be aware of God's presence when we are in a place that is special to us, such as a hiking trail, a beach, a garden or park, or a beautiful room. We may encounter Jesus when we experience a smile, a kind word, an encouraging hug, or a generous gift of time from someone who loves us as Jesus does. When we pray, when we listen to beautiful music, when we laugh, when we reach out in forgiveness to another person, when we are touched by poetry, and when we encounter someone who needs our care and love, we encounter Jesus.

Invite participants to share how they have encountered Jesus through people they know, places that are special to them, or events that have great meaning in their lives.

Large Group Sharing: Making Connections

Ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group either what they shared or what someone in their group shared.

Make the connection between encountering Jesus in these many ways and the unique encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. As the community gathers to worship, we encounter Christ in one another. We listen to God's Word and encounter Jesus speaking to us through the Word proclaimed. The presider represents Christ, gathering us in prayer to remember the common story of our Salvation. Christ comes to us as his very Body and Blood in the consecrated bread and wine of Eucharist. Thus we are nourished by the bread and enlivened by the wine that is truly the presence of Christ. This mystery of faith is one we experience with each other when we gather at Mass to thank and praise God for the gift of Jesus. As a community of faith, we are strengthened and given life through our encounters with Jesus. We become the Body of Christ when we eat the bread and drink the wine that is Jesus' living presence among us.

Call to Prayer

Announce the start of the prayer time by ringing a small bell, beginning to play some background music, or by some other creative means. Invite participants to sit quietly and focus their thoughts on God's presence here and now. Allow time for the group to quiet down. Then invite everyone to stand and begin the prayer. (Give the leader and readers a copy of the prayer and Litany.)

Conclusion

Following the prayer thank the participants for their presence and encourage them to stay awhile for socializing. Have an evaluation form available for them to complete, inviting their comments and suggestions.

Do This in Remembrance of Me

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Almighty God,
you sent your Son to be with us in our struggles, in our joys,
and in all the everyday events that make up our lives.
We thank you for Jesus,
for his gift of himself in Holy Communion.
We ask you to bless us today
as we have shared ourselves with one another.
Bless the children and their families
that we will be preparing for First Eucharist.
Give us the guidance of your Holy Spirit.
We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us now open our ears and our hearts to hear God's Word.

Reader: A reading from the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

(Proclaim 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Silent Reflection

Note: A brief Scripture reflection can be offered at this time, focusing on how we live out the Eucharist in our everyday lives by helping those who need our help, by being peacemakers, by being patient and kind, and by remembering the message of Jesus to love one another.

Litany of Thanksgiving

Leader: We give you thanks,
God of abundant life,
for bread and friendship and hope.
With these gifts of your grace we are nourished.
With these signs of your presence
we are able to be faithful. Amen.

Let us pray now in thanksgiving
for what God has done for us.

Please respond, "Lord, we give you thanks and praise."

Reader: For all that is beautiful in the world.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the happiness you have brought to our lives.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the Earth, and for our brothers and sisters all over the world.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For the children and their families that are preparing to receive you
in communion.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Reader: For calling us to do this holy work.

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Leader: Please add your prayers of thanksgiving. (Pause to allow partici-
pants time to offer their prayers.)

All: Lord, we give you thanks and praise.

Leader: Christ comes to us in Holy Communion, and remains with us to
nourish us in faith, hope, and love. Let us pray together the prayer
Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

Leader: Let us go in peace to praise, thank, love, and serve God and
one another.

All: Thanks be to God.

Liturgy Planning: Eucharist



First Eucharist Service

Use the following suggestions as you plan and prepare for the celebration of First Eucharist.

Planning the Liturgy

- Because of the emphasis on Baptism and Eucharist, the Easter season is an appropriate time to schedule First Eucharist liturgies.
- You may wish to have the First Eucharist children seated with their families to celebrate this Mass. It is not only comforting for the children to be surrounded by their families during this liturgy, it is also a sign and reminder of the promises made at Baptism of the family's commitment to support the faith of their children.
- It is good for the children to be seated where they can see the altar well, but don't isolate them and their families from the rest of the assembly.
- When selecting liturgical ministers for this liturgy, consider inviting parishioners who are the regularly scheduled ministers, not members of the children's families. Families then can focus on the liturgical celebration with their children.
- Select music that the children and the families know. Consider using the music on the RCL Benziger *Eucharist* music CD.
- Be sure to include the children and their families in the Prayer of the Faithful.
- The presider should invite First Eucharist children and their families to approach the altar before the rest of the assembly during Communion. Once the children and their families have returned to their places, the Communion procession proceeds in the usual manner.
- Make sure an announcement is made before the liturgy begins about your parish's policy on photography.
- After a period of silence at the conclusion of the Communion Rite, the presider should offer words of congratulations and support to the First Communion children and their families.
- If possible plan a simple parish celebration for the children and their families after Mass, with light refreshments. This is a time for parishioners to congratulate the children and wish them well.
- Following First Eucharist, be sure to list the names of the children in the bulletin, and include thanks for the families, catechists, liturgical ministers, and anyone else who helped with this special celebration.

Celebrating First Eucharist

Use this worksheet for planning the First Eucharist liturgy.

Introductory Rites

Song _____

Consider using Eucharist songs that the children have learned in the course of their preparation for First Eucharist. See RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD for suggestions.

Collect _____

Note: Consider including the Rite of Sprinkling in the Introductory Rites.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading _____

For the readings, you may wish to use the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*.

Responsorial Psalm _____

Second Reading _____

Gospel Acclamation _____

Gospel _____

Homily

Profession of Faith

Prayer of the Faithful _____

If children are offering the petitions, make sure they are well rehearsed.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation of the Gifts _____

Select candidates and their families to bring up the gifts.

Eucharistic Prayer

A selection from the *Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children* may be used.

Communion Rite

Communion Song _____

Blessing of the Children

Concluding Rites

Closing Song _____

Blessing and Dismissal

With Open Arms: A Ritual of Welcome



Introduction

This ritual is celebrated at a liturgy prior to the children beginning their preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The children are introduced to the parish by their parents or godparents and are affirmed by the assembly as they begin their formal Sacrament preparation sessions. The ritual occurs prior to the final blessing.

Reserve pews in the Church for the children and their families.

The Ritual

The leader (program director, catechist) begins with words of welcome to the children and their families.

Leader: Today we have with us a number of children who will soon begin their preparation to celebrate First Eucharist. Let us welcome these children with open arms as they begin their Sacramental journey. As I call their names, will the children and their families please stand?

(Names are called and children and families stand.)

Next, the presider, the celebrant of the Mass, continues with the ritual.

Presider: As we see these faith-filled families and their children standing among us, we are grateful to God for them. We pray that God will bless them as they begin their journey to the table of the Eucharist.

Let us pray.

Blessed be God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in his great mercy, has given us these children as a sign of hope in the world. By Baptism they entered into the new life of Christ Jesus. Now, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they desire to continue their journey of faith as they prepare for First Eucharist. (Adapted from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 419, 420)

And so I ask you, children, as you begin to prepare for Eucharist, are you ready to deepen your understanding of your Baptism?

Children: We are.

Presider: Are you ready to listen carefully to the words of encouragement and instruction given to you by your families and by your catechists?

Children: We are.

Presider: Are you ready to join more completely with us in a life of prayer and service?

Children: We are.

Presider: Parents, godparents, and families: You have brought these children to us today and have presented them as candidates for First Eucharist. Are you ready to help them prepare to celebrate this Sacrament?

Parents, Godparents, and Families: We are.

Presider: Are you willing to support your children, teach them, pray for them, and affirm them as they continue their Sacramental journey?

Parents, Godparents, and Families: We are.

Presider: Are you prepared to be living models of faith to these children?

Parents, Godparents, and Families: We are.

Presider: Then I ask you, parents, godparents, and families, to bless your children by tracing a sign of the cross on their foreheads and embracing them.

(Parents, godparents, and families do so.)

Presider: And now, I ask the rest of you gathered here today: As members of this assembly, are you prepared to offer your example, your support, your encouragement, and your prayers for these children and their families?

All: We are.

Presider: Then let us welcome these children, blessed by us and by their families, as they begin preparation for Eucharist.

(Pause)

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God, whose love gathers us together as one, look kindly upon these children, already consecrated to you in Baptism, and draw them into the fullness of faith. Bless them, and their families, with peace, joy, and love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The celebrant continues with the final blessing of the Mass.

Eucharist

We Give Thanks and Praise

Connecting to Families

Parents also have the right and the duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Communion. The catechesis offered should help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to catechize their children more effectively.

National Directory for Catechesis 36A3.a

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Implementing the Family Experience Days



Purpose

“Children’s preparation for first reception of the Eucharist begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation for a child’s understanding of the Eucharist” (*National Directory for Catechesis* 36.3.3a).

In order to involve the family more deeply in the preparation process, the following sessions gather the parents and children together for a day or evening of shared learning. The Family Experience Days for Eucharist focus on:

- Eucharist—a Sacrament of Initiation
- The Liturgy of the Word—a time for listening to God’s Word
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist—a time for the community to give thanks and praise
- The Eucharist—a call to mission

Who Should Attend

These sessions are intended for the parish children preparing for First Communion and their families. If a parent cannot attend, ask that another family member accompany the child.

Scheduling

These sessions should be scheduled well in advance for families to adjust their schedules accordingly and attend. You may wish to consider a Saturday or Sunday session rather than a weekday evening session. Communicate the schedule for the sessions in written form and follow up with a reminder notice as each date comes closer. The suggested time for each session is two hours, but it may be adjusted according to your parish needs.

Note: Session Four invites the children and their families to return after the children have celebrated First Communion. Their session is mystagogy—a reflection on the present with a look to the future.

Environment

Participants should experience a warm, friendly environment upon their arrival. Have nametags, greeters, a sign-in sheet, and refreshments available as everyone arrives.

Family Experience Day #1

Eucharist: The Fullness of Christian Initiation

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to lead children and their families to an understanding of Baptism as the entrance into the life of the Church, and Eucharist as the fullness of the Sacraments of Initiation. While the children's first celebration of the Eucharist is a significant event, emphasis also should be placed on First Communion as an initiation into a lifetime of Eucharist celebrations.

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for the parish children preparing for First Eucharist and their families.

Scheduling

This session may be offered prior to the children beginning their preparation or after they have completed the first chapter in their books.

Environment

Participants should experience a friendly environment upon their arrival. Set up a welcome table with name tags. Design an enthronement of the Word of God at the center or front of the room, with a banner that reads *We Give Thanks and Praise*. Set up a prayer table as the focal point. Drape the table with a cloth reflecting the liturgical season. On the table prominently display the Lectionary or Bible, a white pillar candle, and a large bowl of water. (If possible, use the Paschal candle in place of the pillar candle.)

Advance Preparation

- Ask parish members to sign prayer cards for the children and their families as a way of supporting them on their journey to Eucharist.
- On a card or a nice sheet of paper, print the words *They will know we are Christians by our love*. Prepare a card for each family.
- Prepare the room with tables and chairs for small groups.
- At the church organize the space around the baptismal font by placing chairs as needed.

Materials Needed

- Bible
- nametags and markers
- copies of Faith Walk handout on page 82
- Church Story questions prepared for distribution or overhead projection
- CD and CD player
- music
- refreshments
- items for prayer table: Bible; large white candle or Paschal candle; big, clear bowl of water; plants

Outline of the Session

Welcome
Opening Prayer
Faith Walk
Life Experience
Break
Presentation
Group Reflection
Church Story
Activity
Closing Prayer

Welcome and Introduction

Warmly welcome the families. Invite participants to make name tags and to greet those around them. Briefly describe the purpose and outline of the session.

Opening Prayer

Call the group to prayer. Play *We Remember*, or another selection from RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD. Light the candle.

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Reader: (Proclaim Luke 24:13–35.)

Leader: Let us pray. Lord our God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to be our Savior and to nourish us with his Body and Blood. We, your children, were brought into your Church at Baptism. Like the travelers on the road to Emmaus, it is at your table of the Eucharist that we meet your Risen Son, Jesus Christ. In the Sacrament of Eucharist, we fulfill the call of Baptism and are formed as one Body in Christ. Open our hearts so that we, too, may follow Jesus on the road of faith, and be faithful members of your Church. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Faith Walk

Invite the families to take a faith walk around the parish grounds. Distribute copies of the handout on page 82, which the parents can use as a guide for this walk-and-talk activity with their child. They will be sharing with their child memories of the child's birth and Baptism.

Life Experience

Gather the participants in the parish church where the chairs have been set up. (As an alternative, you may gather the families back at the meeting space where the prayer table is set up with a bowl of water.) Invite volunteers to share what they talked about with their parents during their faith walk. Ask them to relate the details that they had not known before or the details that they most enjoyed. Use the faith walk handout as a guide to prompt responses, especially details of their Baptism.

Initiate a discussion that draws on the parallels between physical birth and the rebirth into the Church that occurs at Baptism. Begin by leading a reflection on the preparations parents made for the birth of their children. Then compare these preparations to those that were made for the Sacrament of Baptism.

The following questions draw from the faith walk discussions, but are designed to guide the participants to see the birth-Baptism parallels in their own lives. Encourage both the adults and the children to respond. It is important that the children participate in the group discussion. Comment on their responses as needed.

- Think about the preparations you had to make for the birth of your child. Then think about the preparation you had to make for your child's Baptism. How are they similar? (Similarities may include sending out announcements, undergoing preparatory programs, and creating a support system among family and friends.)
- How did you celebrate your child's birth? How did you celebrate your child's Baptism? How are these celebrations similar? (Similarities may include having a special dinner or gathering, inviting the same family and friends, and photographing or videotaping the event.)

Next, bring participants to a deeper understanding of the parallels between physical birth and rebirth into Christ's Church.

- Birth is the welcome or beginning in our families. Baptism is the welcome or beginning of life in Christ and the Church.
- A child's birth is the first of many family celebrations. Baptism is the first of the three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist).

Gather the families around the baptismal font. (If in the meeting space, gather the families around the prayer table.) Invite the parents and children to renew their baptismal promises. (Baptismal promises can be found in *The Rites* or in the *Roman Missal*.) Then ask the parents to bless their child with the water: they can make the Sign of the Cross on the child's forehead or pour a small amount of the water onto the child's head. Explain to the children that these gestures are reminders of their Baptisms.

Break

Return to the meeting space. Invite participants to enjoy some refreshments and conversation with each other. Encourage them to talk to people they don't already know.

Presentation

Gather the families once again and invite them to be seated. Briefly review how Baptism initiates people into the life of the Church, not unlike how birth leads to family life. Then remind them that Eucharist is an integral part of this life in the Church, the Body of Christ. Eucharist is the central element of our relationship with God. It is at the table of the Lord that we meet Jesus Christ, forming us as one Body in him. It is Eucharist that nourishes and sustains us throughout our lives. Eucharist draws us into greater participation as members of Christ's Church.

Group Reflection

Invite the participants to close their eyes for a moment and picture in their minds the most wonderful gift they have ever received. Ask them to remember the joy of receiving the gift and how special the gift made them feel. Then ask them to imagine how they would feel if they could receive that gift every day of their lives. Have them open their eyes. Allow the people, especially the children, to share their responses.

Explain to them that Eucharist is such a gift. It is the wonderful gift of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ that they can enjoy every day of their lives.

Church Story

For this part of the session, the participants will hear about the early Eucharist gatherings. Explain to them that the Eucharist has been the central part of Christian life from the earliest days of the Church. Just as we do today, the first Christians came together to break bread and share a meal. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Christ makes himself known in the breaking of the bread. As the participants listen to the reading about the early Church, ask them to imagine what these first Christian communities were like. Notice how much the author talks about breaking bread and eating meals together.

Read Acts 2:42-47. Discuss the story with the families. Encourage the children to respond to what they heard in the story. Allow time for responses. Hand out copies of or project the following questions.

- What were some things the early Christians did together? (*Suggested answers: they ate, prayed, and praised God together.*)
- Why did they come together? (*Suggested answers: to worship and praise God, to support each other—physically and spiritually—and to remember Jesus and his teachings.*)
- Why do you think the early Christians wanted to share everything they owned? (*Suggested answers: they were modeling themselves after Jesus—being humble servants of the community, including the poor and less fortunate; they were following Jesus’ Commandment to love one another.*)
- What happened as a result of their gatherings? (*Suggested answers: the Word of God spread, and the number of followers of Christ grew.*)

After discussing the communal life of the early Church, talk about the similarities between how the early Christians gathered and how modern-day Christians gather for Eucharist. Like the disciples from the reading, Catholics come together to remember Jesus, pray together, and celebrate the Eucharist. Guide the families into seeing the parallels between the lives of early Christians and their own lives with the following questions:

- What are some things that you do together as Catholics? (*Suggested answers: celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday at Mass, pray together, volunteer together, gather together as a community, and serve and support each other.*)
- Why do you come together? (*Suggested answers: to worship and praise God, to know Jesus Christ, to be one Body in Christ, to support each other, and to help others.*)
- How do you share with others? (*Suggested answers: being involved in food and clothing drives, visiting the sick, volunteering your talents, and participating in Mass.*)

Activity

Take out the cards with the words *They will know we are Christians by our love*. Hand one card to each family. Invite them to discuss with their family and decide on a pledge for the week. Pose the question, *How will we as a family show that we are followers of Christ?* Have them write or draw their pledge on the card. Pledge examples might include attending Mass together, visiting someone who is sick, or contributing to a canned food drive. Encourage the families to take the pledge cards home and display them where everyone in the family can see them and be reminded of their promise.

Closing Prayer

Play Pan de Vida, or another hymn suitable for prayer. (See RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD.) Light the candle.

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: We have been baptized into the Body of Christ. These children among us are preparing for the day when they eat and drink of the one Body of Christ. Let us pray for them and those who prepare them.

(Pause)

Leader: God of all that is good, you gave us new life in the Body of Christ at Baptism. The time for these children to eat and drink at your table is fast approaching. Help them listen to your Word and answer your invitation to the Eucharist. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reader: (Proclaim 1 Corinthians 12:12–13.)

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100: We Are God's People (David Haas/GIA Publications), or another appropriate psalm may be sung.

(Pause for Silent reflection)

Leader: (A lay minister says the following prayer with hands joined. It is adapted from the *Book of Blessings*, No. 151. If a priest or deacon is praying the blessing, No. 150 is used.)

Lord Jesus Christ,

you loved children so much that you said:

“Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me.”

Hear our prayers and, with your unfailing protection,
watch over these children

whom you have blessed with the grace of baptism.

When they have grown to maturity,

grant that they will confess your name in willing faith,

be fervent in charity,

and persevere courageously in the hope of reaching your kingdom,
where you live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

All: Make the Sign of the Cross.

Distribute the prayer cards to the families. Point out that the cards were signed by people in their parish as reminders of their support.

Faith Walk Discussion Questions

Parents, please take a few minutes to take a faith walk and talk with your child. Use the following discussion questions as a guide. You will be initiating most of the ideas during this talk, but encourage your child to ask questions.

- Talk about how you prepared for your child's birth. Tell your child how you felt when you learned you were expecting him or her. Did you know the gender? Was this your first child? Did you have a baby shower?
- Tell your child about the day he or she was born. When and where was he or she born? What are some of the details? Did you record the birth? How did you choose the child's name? Who were the visitors? How did you celebrate your child's arrival? Was a room prepared for the baby? Who was there to welcome the baby home?
- Talk about your child's Baptism. Did you undergo a pre-baptismal program to learn more about the Sacrament? How did you choose your child's godparents?
- How did you celebrate your child's Baptism? Who attended the Baptism? Did you have a special dinner or party?



Family Experience Day #2

We Listen to God's Word

. . . [B]lessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.

Luke 11:28

Purpose

The purpose of the session is to explore with new appreciation the Liturgy of the Word, and to raise awareness of the importance of listening so as to act on the Word of God.

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for the children preparing for First Eucharist and their families.

Scheduling

This session may be offered after the children have completed chapter three in their books. You may wish to consider a Saturday or Sunday for this session rather than a weekday evening.

Environment

Participants should experience a warm, friendly environment upon their arrival. Have a prayer table set up as a focal point in the room. Drape the table with a cloth reflecting the liturgical season. Prominently display the Lectionary or Bible on the table. You may wish to add a candle and possibly a green plant.

Materials needed

- nametags and markers
- small colored squares of yellow, blue, red, and green
- prayer table décor
- session handout
- Bible or Lectionary
- RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD
- CD player
- refreshments

Advance Preparation

- Decide which Sunday readings you will use for the Liturgy of the Word.
- Prepare a brief reflection or questions for an interactive reflection.
- Ask a capable adult to prepare and proclaim the readings.
- Prepare the colored squares for each table.
- Prepare the meeting space in such a way as to make it warm and inviting for families. Arrange six to eight chairs around tables.
- Set up a welcome table with name tags.

- Provide refreshments for the end of the session.
- Prepare the prayer table.

Welcome and Introduction

Warmly welcome the families. Ask participants to introduce themselves to those sitting around them. Briefly describe the purpose of the session.

Life Experience

Hold up a storybook. Ask the group if they like to listen to stories. Invite children and adults to share a few of their favorites. Ask the children what is needed so that they can best hear the story and pay attention to it being read. Ask the adults what they need in order to concentrate when reading a book. Affirm their answers and segue into explaining that the Liturgy of the Word is a time of listening at Mass to the stories of God’s people who lived before, during, and after the time of Jesus—stories that tell about God’s presence, love, and forgiveness. A prayerful attitude is needed when God’s Word is read so that we can hear what God is saying to us through the reading.

Point out that stories have always been used to tell of the great goodness of God and that retelling the Scripture stories is a way to celebrate God’s goodness from the beginning of time. Retelling the stories and listening to them are a way through which we worship, praise, and thank God. It is a way of remembering. Tell the group that they are now going to participate in an exercise of remembering.

Invite members of the table groups to each take one colored square and to remember its color. Write on a whiteboard or project the following tasks to be assigned:

- Yellow: Tell a story about something funny that happened in your family.
- Red: Tell a story about a time during which you or your family felt close to God.
- Blue: Retell your favorite story about Jesus.
- Green: Name which one of the Scripture stories—The Creation of the World or The Parable of the Lost Sheep—helps you to remember something special about God. Share what that something special is.

Allow time for sharing at the tables. Ask if everyone was able to remember a story to tell. What helped the person to remember?

The Liturgy of the Word

Explain that the group is going to celebrate a Liturgy of the Word and that they will be experiencing a way of exploring the Scriptures and making meaning of the Scriptures for their life.

Explain that Scripture has been a part of liturgy since the earliest days of the Church because much of the form of Catholic worship has come from Jewish practices. Tell about the time Jesus stood up in the temple and read from the book of Isaiah (see Luke 4:16–22). Mention that during the Last Supper the Apostles and Jesus were retelling stories of the Exodus and how God helped the Israelites. They spoke of God’s great love for them. Remind them that Jesus and his friends would have been sharing some of the stories from the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament.

Mention how wonderful it is for us to have not only the Old Testament but also the New Testament through which we learn about Jesus and the beginning of the Church.

Hold up the Bible and show the section of the Old Testament. Review briefly that this part of the Bible holds the stories in which God speaks to us through the people who lived long before the time of Jesus. Show the section of the New Testament. Remind everyone that this includes the stories in which God speaks to us through Jesus and the people who lived during and after the time of Jesus. Reference the probability that the children’s teachers in school will ask them to sit up, behave, and pay close attention to the story they are reading. Reiterate that we must be very attentive listeners to the readings in church because God speaks to us through them!

Ask the children and their families if they remember what the stories in the Old Testament are about. Share that singing or saying the **Responsorial Psalm** is a wonderful moment for us to sing to God in return. Mention that others wrote these long before the time of Jesus and they are, therefore, found in the Old Testament. Tell the group that Catholics are privileged to use them for prayer. Explain that the **Second Reading** is read from the New Testament. Ask if they remember what the stories in the New Testament are about.

Define the Alleluia of the **Gospel Acclamation** as a prayer in which we say, “Praise you, Lord!” Stress that we stand in readiness to hear the Gospel because it is the Good News that Jesus brought, and we are usually very excited to hear good news!

Teach that the **Gospel** represents Christ who is present in the community through his Word. Ask if someone knows in which of the two Testaments the Gospel is found. Emphasize that the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. Explain that to become ready to hear the Gospel, we bless ourselves by making a small cross on our forehead, lips, and heart and pray silently, “May the words of the Lord be in my mind, upon my lips, and in my heart.” Practice this together.

Say that the **Homily** is a time when the priest or deacon helps us understand the readings so we can apply what God is saying to our own lives.

Describe the **Creed** as a statement of our Catholic beliefs and that in reciting the Creed we say *yes* to what we believe. The Creed says we believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Next, emphasize that God's children must love and pray for one another. The **Prayer of the Faithful** are our prayers asking God's help for everyone and the world.

Break for some light refreshments

Liturgy of the Word with Breaking Open the Word

Gathering Song Set the tone of this section by listening to or singing together *Open Our Ears* or *Let the Children Come* from RCL Benziger's *Eucharist* music CD.

As people sing have the reader process forward with the Bible or Lectionary and place it on the prayer table.

Opening Prayer (Invite everyone to stand.)

Leader: Let us pray. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Give us, O God, hearts that are open and ready to receive your holy Word. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Readings Use the readings for the coming Sunday. In this way adults and children will have an experience of reflecting on the readings and Gospel in advance. (Sometimes the readings are more difficult to understand. If this is the case use the readings of the previous Sunday.)

After the Opening Prayer, have the reader take the Bible or Lectionary from the prayer table and go to the place selected for the proclamation of the Scriptures.

Invite everyone to be seated so that they may listen attentively to the words from Scripture.

Proclaim the First Reading. After the reading pause for silent reflection.

Responsorial Psalm: Remain seated and sing together the responsorial psalm. Musical settings for the psalms are found in most hymnals.

Second Reading: The reader proclaims the Second Reading. As before, pause for silent reflection.

Gospel Acclamation: Invite all to stand and sing an acclamation that is familiar to the parish.

Gospel: Reverence the Bible and proclaim the Gospel.

(Use the blessing prayer while making the Sign of the Cross on the forehead, lips, and heart. All: May the words of the Lord be in my mind, upon my lips, and in my heart.)

Breaking Open the Word Invite each family present to share among their thoughts and feelings about the readings they have just heard. You may ask them to focus specifically on the Gospel. Use the following general questions (on the handout) as a way to explore the Scriptures:

What did you feel as you listened to the readings?

Who are the key characters in the passage?

What is taking place in the story?

Where is the story taking place?

When is the story taking place?

Why is the story being told?

How is the story important for us today?

Who did you relate to in the story?

What did the story say to you? What are some images you recall? What did you like best about the story?

Devote sufficient time for family discussions. Then invite volunteers to share some thoughts and feelings about the Scriptures that were a part of their family discussion. Affirm each person's response after sharing with the large group.

Creed Ask people to stand and pray the Nicene Creed together.

Intercessions Provide an example of an intercession and response and then invite people to offer their own intercessions to which everyone replies, "Lord, hear our prayer."

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving God,
be with us and bless us as we listen to your holy Word at Mass.
Help us to listen with our mind and heart.
Help us to understand the teachings of your Son, Jesus Christ.
We make this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Close with an appropriate song.

Before dismissing everyone encourage the families to discuss together what they hear in the readings and the homily after Mass. Suggest they make this a regular practice on their way home from church.

Thank everyone for coming. Make any announcements and distribute the handout.

Optional Activities

Dramatize the Gospel If the Gospel lends itself, invite a family or families to act out the Gospel. You will need to prepare a script ahead of time.

Explore Listening Invite families to reflect on how well family members listen to each other at home. Expand the discussion to include how well they listen to other people and how well they listen to the readings at Mass. Then have them explore what makes a good listener. Have them make a list of the qualities of a good listener and then share the list with the larger group.



Eucharist Family Experience Day #2

Points to Remember

- The Mass, also known as the celebration of the Eucharist, has two parts. The first part is the Liturgy of the Word.
- In the Penitential Act we ask for forgiveness for the times we were not loving during the week. We praise God for his mercy.
- The Liturgy of the Word requires that we listen attentively to Old and New Testament readings so we can hear what God is saying to us today. During the Responsorial Psalm, we sing or speak to God in return.
- Preparing to hear the Gospel, we trace a small cross on our forehead, mouth, and heart and silently pray, “May the words of the Lord be in my mind, upon my lips, and in my heart.”
- We stand to hear the Gospel because it is the Good News that Jesus brought. Our Alleluia means “Praise you, Lord.”
- The priest or deacon explains the readings in the homily.
- In the Creed, we say “I believe in God!” The Creed we normally pray at Mass is the Nicene Creed.
- We pray for God’s people and for the world in the Prayer of the Faithful. We express our caring and concern for others.
- Bedtime Bible stories and discussions about what God might be saying is good preparation for listening at Mass.
- Blessing your children on the forehead with the Sign of the Cross creates a felt presence of God in your home.

A Family Ritual

As a family read the Sunday Scriptures ahead of time. Select the Gospel to concentrate on.

Use the following to recall and explore the Gospel story:

What did you feel as you listened to the readings?

Who are the key characters in the Gospel story?

What is taking place in the story?

Where is the story taking place?

When is the story taking place?

Why is the story being told?

How is the story important for us today?

Who did you relate to in the story?

What are some images you recall?

What did you like best about the story?

Family Experience Day #3

We Give Thanks and Praise

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to develop an appreciation of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in order to fully celebrate the Mass with an attitude of thanks and praise.

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for parish children preparing for First Eucharist and their families.

Scheduling

This session may be offered after the children have completed the sixth chapter in their books. You may wish to consider a Saturday or Sunday for this session rather than a weekday evening.

Environment

Participants should experience a warm, inviting environment when they arrive. Nametags and light refreshments should be available to them. Set up a prayer table in the front or center of the room. Cover the table with a cloth reflecting the liturgical season, and place on it symbols of Eucharist such as: bread, wheat, wine, and grapes along with a crucifix and Bible or Lectionary. If possible, place the Paschal candle next to the table or place a white pillar candle on the table.

Materials needed

- nametags and markers
- written interview questions
- handouts on pages 95-96
- cutouts of a slice of bread (one for each family)
- prayer table décor
- RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD
- CD player
- refreshments
- pens and paper

Advance Preparation

- Set up the room for family groups, either using tables or chairs arranged in small circles.
- Make copies of the interview questions for the small group activity (see "Life Experience"), the closing prayer, and handouts.
- Make bread slices from brown construction paper or brown paper bags (one for each family) for the Our Daily Bread activity.

- Ask participants to help with the reading of the closing prayer.
- Have the interview questions and handouts on a side table. Set up a welcome table with nametags.
- Prepare refreshments for the break and after the session.
- Set up the prayer table.
- Place pens and paper on the small group tables.
- Make a poster with the words *We Give Thanks and Praise*. Place this in a conspicuous place in the room.

Welcome and Introduction

Warmly welcome the families. Ask participants to introduce themselves to those sitting around them. Briefly describe the purpose of the session.

Opening Prayer

Bring all to quiet readiness. Have a family process in the Bible and place it on the prayer table. Play the song *Come to the Table* or *Pan de Vida*, available on Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD.

Leader: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Let us pray.

Loving God, you bless us with many gifts: our family, our world, and especially your Son, Jesus. Fill us with your Spirit so we will know the true gift of gathering as your Church and giving you thanks and praise! We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.

Reader: (Proclaim Luke 22:14–20.)

Leader: Lord God, we thank you for this time together. May we offer you thanks and praise by our attentive listening and sharing. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.

Life Experience

Distribute sheets with the following questions about giving thanks, celebrating, and serving. Invite family members to take turns asking each other the questions. Ask them to write their responses.

1. What are some things you give thanks to God for? How do you give thanks?
2. How do we as a family show God we are thankful?
3. Talk about a time that your family gathered to celebrate. Who was there? What did you celebrate? Where did you celebrate? How did you celebrate? Was a meal part of the celebration?
4. How have you helped someone lately that showed you were a follower of Jesus? What could you do this week?

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Thank everyone for sharing. Briefly review the questions with the whole group and ask for families to share their responses to the questions. Explain that the Mass is about *giving thanks, celebrating and blessing God's goodness, and being sent forth to serve others*—similar to all the things that they were just sharing with each other.

Thanksgiving

Tell the group that you are going to be looking at the three themes of Eucharist mentioned above. Remind the families of their discussion of thankfulness. Lead participants to realize that being thankful for something or someone allows them to appreciate and enjoy that thing or person. Tell participants that an attitude of thanksgiving allows us to enter more deeply into communion with each other, the Church, and Christ. Point out that the Eucharistic Prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving. This is the center of and the high point of the Mass. Remind participants that during the Eucharistic Prayer, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

A spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude is important for our daily living with one another and is especially important in our relationship with God. As we grow in developing a grateful heart, we bring that attitude to our celebration of the Eucharist where, with the community, we give thanks to God. Here we offer thanks and in that offering go forth with a deeper sense of gratitude in our hearts. St. Paul reminds us that we should “in all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (*1 Thess. 5:18*).

Briefly talk about how the prayers in the Liturgy of the Eucharist help us to remember God's goodness and to give him thanks and praise. Ask for someone to name the items that are brought to the altar during the Presentation of the Gifts. Ask why we offer those particular gifts (the bread, wine, and money offerings). Remind everyone that we are to offer the gift of ourselves and our talents to God as well.

Praise

Read the words of the “Holy, Holy, Holy” from the Mass. Then ask the group to think about why we praise God. Ask, “Why does God deserve our praise?” Lead participants to understand that God deserves our praise simply because he is God. We give ourselves to God when we praise him because we show through our prayer that we belong to him.

Unity in Celebration

Tell the families that God wants all his people to be present at his table. Ask families to recall the times that they gathered for a special meal and not all family members were present. Ask, “How did that feel? Why was it important for you to have everyone present at the meal?” Make the point that in a similar way, the Church’s unity and strength depends on the presence of all its members. Explain to participants that God calls all people to his Eucharistic table. Point to the loaf of bread and cluster of grapes on the prayer table. Point out how one loaf of bread is made out of many grains and one cup of wine is made from many grapes to indicate how God forms one Church out of many members. At the Sign of Peace, we show our willingness to be one with God and one another. Finally, tell participants that the Eucharist helps unite us not only to each other and the Church, but to Christ as well.

Break

Invite participants to enjoy some refreshments and conversation with each other. Encourage them to talk to people they don’t already know.

Holy Communion: Christ’s Body and Blood

After the break gather the families once again. Invite the families to reflect on the most recent time they experienced love. Ask volunteers to briefly describe their experience of love. Then ask them to explain how the love was communicated. Responses include simple gestures such as a hug, a handshake, a kiss, a letter, or a gift. Explain that these things alone do not have much meaning until they are given out of love.

Tell participants that God also uses simple things to communicate his love. Point to the bread and wine on the prayer table and say, “God transforms ordinary things like bread and wine at Mass into the Body and Blood of Christ.” Then highlight the following points:

- Christ becomes present in the bread and wine at the consecration at Mass, when the priest prays the words of Jesus: “This is My Body” and “This is the cup of My Blood.”
- Jesus gave us the Eucharist because he loves us.
- The Eucharist helps us live in Christ.
- We must prepare ourselves to receive Holy Communion worthily.
- Communion is unity with God and one another.

Sent Forth to Glorify the Lord by Our Lives

Ask the families what the following statement means to them: *We are sent forth to glorify the Lord by our lives.* Have them relate their responses to what they said at the beginning of the session about what they did to show they were followers of Christ (Question 4 under Life Experience). Explain that at

every Eucharist, we are sent forth to glorify the Lord by our lives. We do this by serving others. We do this by feeding the hungry and offering our time and our talents to support others.

Another way of serving others is through prayer. Lead the families into the next activity.

Activity: Our Daily Bread

Explain to families that they will be doing an activity to help prepare their home for the celebration of First Eucharist. Distribute the bread slice cutouts, one per family. Ask families to write these questions on their bread cutouts. Then have families reflect and respond to these questions in their groups:

- What things do we need and wish to ask God for? (These petitions may include asking God to help a sick family member or asking God for guidance in making an important decision.)
- What things have we received that we wish to praise and give thanks to God for? (These petitions may include thanking God for the gift of good health or a new job.)

Tell families to briefly write at least two responses to each question on their bread cutouts. At least one of the responses to each question should come from the children. Invite them to decorate their bread slice cutouts.

When they are finished, collect the cutouts and place them on the prayer table. Then explain to the families they will have the opportunity to choose another family's bread cutout during the closing prayer to take home and offer prayers on their behalf. Tell participants that they will be expected to use the bread cutouts to pray at the dinner table at least once a week. These prayers will help families understand that as they pray for others, they develop a bond of unity with other members of the Church family. Prayer for others helps strengthen the unity of the Church.

Moreover, explain to participants that this prayer is designed to heighten their family's awareness of Eucharist in daily life.

Review: Things to Know and Do in Preparation for First Eucharist

Hand out copies of page 96. Answer any questions as necessary. Distribute any other handouts with your parish's instructions about First Communion day itself, regarding rehearsals, dress, etc. (See *Everything You Want to Know* about the First Eucharist Celebration on pages 112-113.)

Closing Prayer and Ritual

Distribute copies of the closing prayer. Ask for volunteers to read the parts of the prayer. Invite a volunteer to light the candle on the prayer table. Play music appropriate for quiet prayer. See RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD for suggestions.

We Give Thanks and Praise!

Leader: In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Gracious Father,
you sent us your Son out of your great love for us.
You nourish us through the Eucharist.
Help us to thank and praise you for all that you give us. Amen.

Reader 1: Please respond: *O Lord, we give you thanks and praise!*

All: O Lord, we give you thanks and praise!

Reader 1: For our families and our Church family who bring us closer to you, we pray . . .

Reader 2: For those times when we hear your Word and come to know how much you love us, we pray . . .

Reader 3: In gratitude for the awesome gift of your Body and Blood in the Eucharist, we pray . . .

Reader 4: For the ways in which you use our gifts to serve others and become bread to the world, we pray . . .

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you become present to us in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Help us to be present to each other in prayer.

To the families: Please come up to the prayer table and take a bread slice cutout (1 per family). Remember to pray for the intentions written on the bread slice. Return to your places for the concluding prayer.

Leader: Dear Lord, may our prayers for each other help us be united as members of God's Church. May our prayers of thanks and praise give you glory. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.



From all you
have given us
we bring you
these gifts.

Things to Know and Do in Preparation for First Eucharist



- Know who Jesus is, some events in his life, and the story of his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven.
- Jesus gave us the Eucharist at his Last Supper.
- Eucharist is at the heart of the life of the Church.
- The consecrated bread and wine are truly the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Eucharist calls us to unity in our thanksgiving, celebrating, and serving.
- Gathering as a Church to celebrate the Eucharist strengthens you and others and makes Christ's presence known to the world.
- Attend Mass on a regular basis.
- Desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
- Ask for God's mercy and forgiveness to be ready and worthily receive the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Include prayer as part of your regular family life.
- Catholics are encouraged to receive Eucharist every time they go to Mass, and are required to receive Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season.
- Catholics fast from food and drink (except water or medicine) for one hour before receiving Communion.

Family Experience Day 4: Mystagogy

Eucharist Calls Us to Mission

Purpose

The purpose of this session is:

- to reflect upon the meaning of the sacramental experience
- to enable participants to articulate a basic understanding of the Sacrament of Eucharist
- to emphasize the Eucharistic call to mission

Who Should Attend

This session is intended for children and their families who have recently celebrated First Eucharist.

Scheduling

This mystagogy session takes place *after* the celebration of First Communion. The session is based on the family's experience of the Sacrament. For a review of the meaning and purpose of mystagogy, please see the Background and Faith Formation sections of the Catechist Edition, Chapter 8.

Note: This session is similar to the child's session found in Chapter 8 of their book. The process of reflecting on the Sacrament is the same. However, this session has more of an emphasis on mission. The dynamic will also be different with parents present. You may opt to do the session that best fits your parish setting, rather than doing both.

Environment

Create an environment conducive to quiet reflection. Allow for comfortable seating so children and adults alike can relax.

Set up a welcome table with nametags.

Set up a prayer table in the front or center of the room that recalls the parish celebration of First Eucharist. Use such items as a large loaf of bread, carafe of red wine, Lectionary, white candle, and a plant.

Instrumental music should be soft, audible, and easy to access. Use candles to help set a mood of quiet reflection.

Advance Preparation

- Notify parents to bring a dish for a potluck meal, if that is what you have planned, and set up accordingly.
- Set up the meeting space and area for the potluck.
- Set up the prayer table.
- Read through the whole process until you feel comfortable with the format.

Materials Needed

- items for the prayer table
- additional candles
- music for meditation
- RCL Benziger's *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* music CD
- CD player
- refreshments
- nametags and markers

Order of the Session

Welcome and Introduction

Begin by expressing the joy the parish feels over the first communicants' reception of the Eucharist. Ask the first communicants to stand and be recognized.

Next, briefly explain the purpose of this mystagogical session as one of remembering First Communion and talking about what Eucharist means. Describe the reflection portion of the session.

Remembering First Communion

Step One: Introduction

Invite participants to make themselves comfortable. Spread out and use all the space in the room. Start the instrumental music. Ask participants to inhale and exhale slowly several times in order to relax and clear their minds of distractions. Ask them to close their eyes and ask the Holy Spirit to enter their heart and hold them close during this meditation.

Step Two: What did you experience?

Once the group is settled, ask them to let their minds wander back to the days when they were preparing for First Holy Communion. Ask the following or similar questions. Adapt the questions to fit your parish's celebration of First Communion. Note how the questions begin with the preparation and move through the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Also, the questions are designed to be applicable to parents and children. The questions are merely a guide to help participants recall the celebration of Eucharist. Time for reflection is allowed between each question.

(Preparation) Think back weeks (months) ago when you began the preparation for First Communion.

Remember the Rite of Enrollment (*With Open Arms*) when you received a special (blessing, book, invitation) to begin your preparation. Remember how you felt about beginning First Communion preparation.

Now, call to mind learning about the Eucharist with your parents, your classmates, and your teacher. What do you remember about that time in the classroom? At home? Hold onto that memory for a moment.

Remember all the Bible stories about Jesus eating and drinking with strangers and friends. What story did you enjoy the most?

As First Communion drew closer, remember feeling more and more excited.

Now, imagine yourself on the day of your First Communion.

Remember getting ready for Mass.

Remember how you felt as you arrived at Church. Picture who was already at Church. What was it like? How did you feel?

(Introductory Rites) Mass is now about to begin. You're ready to process into Church.

How did you feel as you walked into Church?

(Liturgy of the Word) Picture yourself sitting and listening to God's Word.

(Leader, read some brief phrases or key images from the readings. Or, sing a refrain from the Responsorial Psalm).

(Liturgy of the Eucharist) Next, you or your friends may have brought the bread and wine to the altar.

Then, we all knelt together for the Eucharistic Prayer and remembered the good works of God and the story of the Last Supper. "[He] broke the bread, gave it to his disciples . . . This is my Body . . . This is my Blood . . ." Remember kneeling there with your family and friends. What was in your mind and in your heart?

Remember giving others the Sign of Peace.

Imagine yourself approaching the altar now to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Remember how you felt as you ate the bread of life and drank the blood of Salvation.

(Concluding Rites) Soon, the celebration was ending, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives." What did you do when you left the Church?

Recall how you and your family continued the celebration.

(Mission) Lastly, think about what you did to continue the Eucharist by glorifying the Lord.

After the final moment of silence, ask the participants to open their eyes and return their thoughts to the present time. Invite volunteers to share what came to mind during the reflection on the experience.

Step Three: What did it mean?

The next step in the session is to connect the experience of Eucharist with the meaning of Eucharist. That is, we have asked the participants what they experienced and now we help them to name what the experience means.

For example, the leader would take the major parts of the Mass and ask questions such as the following:

Leader: How were you feeling as you were getting ready to come to Church?

Child Respondent: I was nervous when I was getting ready because I thought I would mess up at Church. My cheeks were turning red, but then I thought about it and wasn't nervous because God is with me.

The leader would then affirm the significant points that were made.

- Often we are nervous for important events. The Sacraments are very important celebrations for our community.
- God is with us always, especially in the Sacraments. We call God's presence in the Sacrament, God's grace.

From the comments the leader extracts the theology. In this way the theology flows from the participants' experience of the Sacraments. If a significant theological point is not made by the participants, the leader may need to ask other questions or make the point directly.

The leader specifically gives attention to the major parts of the Mass:

- Introductory Rites
- Liturgy of the Word
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Communion Rite
- Concluding Rites

Theological points to draw from participants

- Eucharist is a Sacrament of Initiation.
- Eucharist is a community celebration of unity with Christ and one another.
- Eucharist is a holy meal.
- Eucharist is a memorial (remembrance) of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection.
- Eucharist is a sacrifice. We remember and make present again Christ's sacrifice for us.
- Eucharist strengthens us and sends us forth in mission. We continue Christ's mission.

Step Four: What will you do?

After remembering the experience and connecting the meaning to the experience, the final step in the mystagogical process is to determine a response. Eucharist calls us to respond in mission. Mystagogy helps us determine what our response will be.

Ask the participants to reflect upon their response to the Eucharist. In light of what has been said during the session, invite each parent to sit with her/his child or children and respond to this or a similar question:

- Now that you have received the Body and Blood of Jesus, how are you different? How will you act differently? (In other words, so what?)

In conclusion ask the children and their parents to share their responses with the large group. Encourage children and parents to give specific examples. Emphasize the Eucharist as nourishment and strength for mission. We continue the work of Jesus Christ. Affirm parents in their role. Stress the importance of continuing to celebrate Eucharist weekly and live Gospel values through the week. Ask participants to name ways they can live Eucharist throughout everyday life.



Closing Prayer

Opening Song: Children of God (RCL Benziger's *Eucharist* music CD)

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: At the Last Supper, Jesus commanded his disciples to do for others, what he had done for them. Now, children, you have eaten at the table with Jesus. You, also, must do as he has done.

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God,

you gave us the gift of your Son in the Eucharist.

Help us to follow his example and wash the feet of others

as he washed the feet of his disciples.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Reader: (Proclaim John 13:1-15, preferably from the *Lectionary for Masses With Children*.)

Responsorial Psalm: Sing Psalm 100: We Are God's People (from RCL Benziger's *Eucharist* music CD).

(Silence)

Reflection: The person giving the reflection speaks about the model Jesus provides for us in the Gospel. She or he asks the children to give examples of how they can wash the feet of others.

Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Closing Blessing (From *Book of Blessings*, No. 154).

Leader: May the Lord Jesus, who loved children, bless us and keep us in his love, now and for ever. Amen.

Closing Song: Go Make a Difference (from RCL Benziger's *Eucharist* music CD)

Sacraments

by Sister Catherine Dooley, O.P.



The sacramental celebrations of your children are always special days because they mark milestones in the child's life of faith and point to the growth of the child from infancy to childhood to the teenage years to adulthood. The celebration of Sacramental rites is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Sacraments and particularly your role in the preparation and celebration. The school or parish provides the immediate preparation, but it is the parents who have been readying them for a long time. The lived experience of the family makes a deeper impression than the concepts learned in a textbook because it is the ordinary everyday actions that are the foundation of the Sacramental life. Your child comes to know God's love through your love.

In the context of the liturgy when we give thanks, when we ask pardon, when we praise, these words take on meaning because of the experience of thanking, forgiving, and affirming that takes place in family life. It has been said that parents should not worry because their children never listen to them but rather should worry because their children are always watching them!

Sacramental Actions

How willing are you to share your faith with your children? Children love stories, and stories from the life of Jesus told again and again are foundational to faith and prepare the children for the liturgical proclamation of the Gospel. Tracing the cross on the forehead of a child before he or she leaves the house or before going to bed teaches him or her the meaning of the cross as the sign of God's love and care and develops a child's sense of identity. To give thanks before a meal or even a simple Sign of the Cross before eating calls to mind the presence of God in your child's life. Even if the child may not yet be able to articulate meaning, the action provides an intuitive way of knowing that is foundational for reflection and integration in the future.

Sacraments are about relationships with God and with one another. Sometimes we place so much focus on our part in the celebration that we forget that Sacraments are God's actions in our lives. Liturgy has special significance as a way of relating to God or responding to God's relating to us. It is important to help your child realize that the purpose of a Sacrament is to give worship and praise to God, to grow in holiness, and to build up the Reign of God.

The Sacrament is not limited to the moment of celebration but is lived out in the future and is in continuity with all that has gone before. Anyone who is married would not say that their wedding day is their marriage; rather it is the beginning of a day-to-day commitment throughout the years that is their marriage. Nor did the couple decide they loved each other on the day of the wedding; that happened long before the wedding. So it is with all Sacraments. Our actual Baptism may have been a long time ago; yet to be a Christian is to continually live out the meaning of the baptismal promises in daily life. With children (and others) it is important to stress that Sacramental celebration is part of the fabric of their lives.

A Call to Action

Because the Sacraments involve more than the moment of celebration, each of the Sacraments calls us to action. As children, when we fought on the way home from Mass our mother would often say, “Well, the Mass didn’t do you much good!” One purpose of the Sacraments is to build up the Reign of God. If we are reconciled in the Sacrament of Penance, then we are called to be reconcilers. The Eucharist commissions us to go in peace and to glorify the Lord by our lives. The Sacraments achieve their effect when they take root in our lives and move us to a greater service of God and neighbor. The question that we might ask our children and ourselves whenever we celebrate a Sacrament is: “What does this Sacrament ask of me?”



Families Living the Sacraments



The first and best teachers of children are their parents. If children see that you do what you ask them to do, your example will have more influence than anything you might say. Here are some suggestions of things to do that will nourish and develop the faith of your children.

- **Make religion part of everyday life.** Have religious symbols in your home, such as a crucifix, an Advent wreath, religious pictures and images, statues, and so on. Attend special services like Eucharistic devotions, Stations of the Cross, and Penance and Reconciliation. Get involved in some aspect of parish life and work. If religion is something you turn to only in a crisis, the children will begin to associate religion with sad and tragic events, rather than as a way of life.
- **Pray together.** Grace before meals, prayers at bedtime, and the Rosary are easy ways that you can acknowledge God as a family. Prayer is the glue that holds the family together. Your faith helps shape and nurture love for one another.
- **Spend time together.** The importance of spending time together cannot be overemphasized. It provides the opportunity to talk and share the day. It allows parents the opportunity to keep tabs on what is happening, see changes in behavior, check on friends, and so on. If you want your children to talk to you and share what they are thinking, feeling, doing, and hoping, then you need to show them you are interested. Your time and interest are extremely important to your children.
- **Talk about your values, hopes, and dreams for your children.** Children will live up to your expectations when they are clear about what you want from them. Let them know what your hopes and dreams for them are. When children understand why something is a value, they are more likely to strive for it. Hold out high goals, but be gentle when they fall short. Give them a boost when they need one.
- **Eliminate prejudice, hatred, racism, and gossip from your home.** Children learn at home attitudes toward others and ways to treat people. Prejudice, hatred, racism, and gossip are harmful, hurtful, and puzzling, especially to younger children. When they hear racial slurs or ethnic jokes, they learn that it is acceptable to make fun of people. Children don't see color, age or nationality. They see people, and adults should, too.

- **Attend Mass as a family every Sunday.** The Mass is the very heart of the Church. At Mass the Church is most visibly the Body of Christ and the community of the faithful. When you admit your need to worship God at Mass, your children will see it as part of life. On the way home from Mass or over breakfast, talk about what each member of the family experienced at Mass. Discuss the Scriptures and the homily. Debate ideas and learn from each other. If something comes up about which you need clarification, seek to find the answer.
- **Make faith and religion a priority.** So many other things seem to occupy a child's life that it is hard to tell what is the most important. Give God, faith, and religion first place. If it is the center of your life and the most important relationship you have, then soccer, piano, dance, Scouts, baseball, basketball, swimming, and a thousand other activities will be put into perspective. If God and faith are not important now, it is unlikely that God and faith will be important later.

Gather 'Round the Good Stuff: Reclaiming the Sunday Sabbath!

by Timothy Mullner



Jesus said to the disciples, “Come away to a deserted place and rest awhile” (Mark 6:31). Yet for today’s disciple, it seems to be “Come away to a busy place and shop awhile.” So goes the offering up of Sunday to modern culture.

Reclaiming the Sabbath

In our fast-paced lives of doing, producing, and succeeding, we’ve forgotten how to pause and rest. There is a Hebrew word, *menuha*, which is an intentional and deliberate pause that is active with reflection and space for God’s unmerited grace. This imperative to stop, reflect, breathe, and ponder our place in the universe, sounds un-American. Yet that’s exactly the role the Sunday Sabbath ought to play in our lives. Although the Sabbath and Sunday hold a different meaning for Christians and Jews, our Sunday practice has its roots in the Jewish Sabbath. There is a lot we can learn about Sunday by understanding the nature of the Sabbath.

Sunday, or The Lord’s Day, is precisely *not* ours! By pausing to reflect on the week, gather in the local parish assembly, and celebrate the Eucharist together, we make time to remember (literally recall and make present now) who we are and to whom we belong. The Hebrew *Shabbat*, means “to stop, rest.” According to early biblical laws (see Exodus 23:12; 34:21; Leviticus 23:2–3) no work is to be done on the Sabbath.

Sunday is our day to be still, to know that we are *not* God. After all, it is God who is the center of our worship together. In a wonderful cartoon, Garfield the Cat enlightens us with two important theological premises: 1. There *is* a God, and 2. You are *not* that God! Sunday is the day above all days when we are invited to surrender and empty ourselves to that truth.

Let’s Table This Discussion

In the catechetical community today, there is talk about lifelong faith formation for the whole parish community. Flowing from the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, an aspect of this formation is breaking open the Word and faith sharing around a question of the week.

Years ago I worked in a parish similar to a church that the humorist Garrison Keillor lovingly dubbed, Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility. The faith formation staff at that time had a grand vision of making faith sharing

and ongoing adult formation a parish priority. Every parish meeting, every catechetical session began with reflection on the Lectionary readings and a Question of the Week. The intent was to connect the Sunday assembly with lived faith in the marketplace. The results were amazing.

Parish council and committee meetings began to take on renewed energy. Confirmation groups and small faith sharing groups grew deeper in faith as they gathered around the table in homes and cafes to break open God's Word. The parish staff even learned to collaborate like none I've seen since.

Sunday is the time and the Eucharistic assembly is the place where we are nourished by the Lord to become bread broken and wine poured out for others. But first we must stop, pause, and let ourselves become the reality that we have experienced in the Sacrament. By gathering around the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist, we remember that this gift of faith is meant to be lived at home and in our daily lives.

Pause and Reflect

1. Is your living space truly a home, a place you enjoy coming back to? What could you add to make it more inviting and life-giving?
2. By staying busy and "shopping 'til you drop," what might you be avoiding at home?
3. How often does your household break bread together each week?
4. When was the last time you invited friends, neighbors, or an enemy to dinner?
5. What ritual does your household share around the table? Where did it come from and what does it symbolize?
6. When was the last time you actually prepared a meal *together* with your family, neighbors, or close friends?
7. Could you take five to ten minutes to recall or read the Sunday Gospel and share a Question of the Week?
8. Are you doing justice to your kitchen table? Could you get involved in the growing movement to slow down and celebrate local food producers and efforts to support healthy, fair trade products?
9. Eat slowly. The simple action of a fork to the mouth can be an extrovert meditation of gratitude to God.
10. After gathering to worship in the Sunday assembly, make Sunday the day when you stay at home. Singles, consider gathering with friends or neighbors. Parents, your kids may scream, but even a couple of hours together will create room for the Spirit of God to break in, renew your hearts, and reconnect your household.

Now take a *deeeeeeep* breath, prepare to worship, and practice your Sunday mantra, "Be still and know that you're *not* God. Be *still* and know that you're *not* . . ."

Including All Children

by Rose Wilkins



To the Program Director: Including Children with Special Needs

“We want your child in our sacramental preparation program. What will it take to make it work?” The role of the program director is not only to make all feel welcome within the program but also to demonstrate within the program a true sense of biblical hospitality and Eucharistic welcome.

On the next page is a handout for parents of children with special needs. This article for parents is meant to convey the awareness and care the Church has for these children and their families. At the same time, it offers some suggestions for building a partnership that will help to make their child’s experience of preparing for the Sacraments a successful and happy one.

This note to you is meant to serve as a reminder of what the Church says about persons with disabilities and their preparation for the Sacraments. Additionally, it offers some practical advice for including all children in parish Sacramental programs.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* states: “All persons with disabilities or special needs should be welcomed in the Church. . . . All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and deserve the means to develop a relationship with God” (NDC 49).

Children with special needs should be integrated into the regular Sacrament preparation program as much as possible. The *National Directory for Catechesis* affirms that children with disabilities should not be treated separately, but should be included as much as possible in preparation sessions with the rest of the children.

Implementing this vision for children with physical or mental challenges calls for a partnership between the pastor, catechetical leaders, catechists, parents, and the parish community. Participants should read and discuss the care of the disabled as set forth in the *National Directory for Catechesis* and in *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*. Out of this dialogue will emerge true pastoral care for all children.

Sometimes catechists are fearful that a child with special needs in the class will be too much work or will be too disruptive to the class. As program director you can help alleviate these fears by fostering communication between parents and catechists on what is best for the child. Read the following handout for parents which offers suggestions for giving the catechist information and tools that will ensure a successful catechetical experience.

To the Parents: Building a Partnership

The Church has spoken great words of love and care for children with special needs, and their families. Once baptized, persons with special needs have a right to be full members of the community of faith that is the parish. “All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and deserve the means to develop a relationship with God” (*National Directory for Catechesis* 49). This includes preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Eucharist. The Church encourages pastors, catechetical leaders, catechists, and parents to include children with special needs in the regular parish program of Sacrament preparation.

Here are some suggestions for building a partnership between you, your child, and the catechist:

- Meet with your child’s catechist prior to the beginning of the parish preparation program for First Penance and Reconciliation. Share the story of your child’s birth. Talk about how you learned to cope with and manage your child’s disability over the years. By nurturing a partnership from the beginning, apprehension about teaching a child with special needs can be greatly reduced.
- Consider preparing a thumbnail sketch of your child to share with the catechist. It is important for your child to be involved in this process, too. Share the following details about your child:
My child’s favorite activities are _____.
My child is especially good at _____.
My child’s friends are _____.
My child’s favorite foods are _____.
My child’s favorite color is _____.
My child’s favorite prayer is _____.
- Share with the catechist any effective methods or techniques often used in your child’s regular classroom. This includes ways your child learns best. (Examples include using visual aids, hand gestures, and musical instruments; encouraging group work or tactile activities; having the child sit up front or close to the teacher.) You might want to give the catechist the name and number of your child’s teacher in school, provided this has been cleared beforehand with the teacher.

These are but a few ways to begin to share information and start a constructive dialogue. Once the relationship has been established, others will be more comfortable with making accommodations for your child.

Your contribution and suggestions are a vital part of the partnership.

Information for Parents

Practice

Seating

First Communion Day (What to Bring, When to Be There)

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

Receiving Holy Communion:

Communion Fast

Dress

Video Recording and Photos

If you have *any questions* about anything regarding the First Eucharist celebration, please call:

Eucharist Bibliography for Families



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