

A Preparation Guide for Parents: Eucharist

Vatican Council II said that parents are “the first and foremost educators of their children.” How a child turns out as an adult Catholic depends more on his or her parents than on the school attended.

What a real difference it makes when parents are aware of the decisive role they play in the faith of their child. Even when children are attending special classes and a teacher is presenting all the information they will need to be ready to make their First Eucharist, parents are more important than the teacher. Children need to know what their parents’ values are. They should be able to identify them and recognize what they believe in and is important to them. They need to see parents acting upon their values with consistency and regularity. This is why parents’ example is most important. Ask yourself, “What kind of values am I instilling in my child? What kind of choices does my child see me make?”

To prepare primary-age children for First Eucharist is to *gather, remember* and *eat* with them. To gather together is to be church. To remember is to make present and alive. We call our gatherings “Eucharist” because at them we remember Jesus as He asked. To eat a meal with others is to share not only food but oneself. Our Eucharist began as a meal. At a meal Jesus made bread and wine the way to remember Him. Jesus shares Himself with us as nourishment in His Body and blood.

A family experience of a meal or a family experience of making bread are actions which help a child understand the Eucharist. After all, a meal is what is enjoyed in Church when the family comes to Mass. Just as we enjoy a meal at home – we enjoy coming each week to a meal in Church. The Mass can help a child preparing for First Eucharist. They can learn the different parts of the Mass – seeing how things fit and becoming acquainted with what happens next. As a family, sit up front where they can see every detail and participate by singing, listening, answering the priest, or even carrying up the gifts. The more a child becomes familiar with the Mass, the more the child is preparing for First Eucharist.

N.B. An important emphasis in preparing your child for his/her First Communion is to connect the Eucharist with the child’s baptism (you became a member of God’s family at baptism so you attend Mass weekly to pray and worship with other members of God’s family who belong to our parish). Set an example for your child by the JOY you show in receiving communion, by the evidence you give at Mass of your understanding that you and all others present are the body of Christ. Perhaps ask your child to remember one thing Father said at Mass and then talk about it on the way home.

Teaching Mass

A teaching Mass is an excellent preparation for the entire family. As the priest actually celebrates a Mass, he does so slowly – explaining his actions, his gestures, his words. The children and their parents gather around first the lectern, then the altar to see what’s happening and understand why.