

First Communion Preparation: Basic Points for Catechesis

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic Faith, the true Presence of Jesus Christ made present sacramentally in the Mass. The goal of the catechist is to raise the children's awareness, awe and appreciation of this great mystery so that First Communion is truly a first encounter with the Eucharistic Jesus. These points are to be given within the context of an entire catechesis on Christ and the sacraments. For points to be taught before First Communion Preparation, see Ogilvie Centre document on "First Reconciliation."

Basic Points from the Scriptures

- God prepared the Eucharist in the Passover Supper (Exodus 12:1-28) and in the Manna from Heaven (Exodus 16)
- Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes (John 6:1-15)
- Jesus instructed his disciples that He is the true Bread from Heaven (John 6:22-69)
- Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-29)
- Jesus revealed that He would remain present to his disciples "in the breaking of the bread" after his resurrection (Luke 24:13-35)
- The early Church celebrated the Eucharist (Acts 2:43-47)

Basic Points from the Liturgy

Basic Elements of the Church

- Name the parts of the altar: altar, altar cloth, candles, crucifix, paten, and chalice, host
- Name the vestments of the priest: alb, stole, chasuble
- Name the basic parts of the Church: altar, lectern, tabernacle, sanctuary lamp, presider's chair, pews, holy water font, images of saints

Basic Elements of Catholic Ritual

- Use holy water to make the sign of the cross with the right hand and using the prayer formula: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" as a sign of God's love and protection and a reminder of baptism.
- Genuflect on the right knee towards the tabernacle when entering the pew as a sign of reverence to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
- Kneeling, standing, and bowing are prayer gestures used in the Mass.
- Silence, listening, responding, and singing are forms of prayer used at Mass.

Basic Parts of the Mass

- *It is appropriate to teach children the responses of the people during the various parts of the Mass.*
- Entrance Rite: The Sign of the Cross, The dialogue: "The Lord be with you: and with your spirit," Penitential Rite
- Liturgy of the Word: Readings, Psalms, Gospel (stand and cross forehead, lips, and heart), Homily, Creed, Prayers of the Faithful
- Liturgy of the Eucharist: Offertory, Sanctus, Eucharistic Prayer highlighting the Epiclesis and Consecration, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Our Father, Sign of Peace, Agnus Dei, Communion
- Dismissal

Basic Points of Doctrine

- A sacrament, and most particularly the sacrament of the Eucharist, is a sign instituted by Christ to give grace. We truly encounter Christ in the Eucharist.
- The priest has been ordained, which means given a power from God through the Church, to offer the Mass.
- Bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer by the words of institution spoken by the priest and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ becomes wholly present in his body, blood, soul and divinity under the appearances of bread and wine.
- The Mass is a remembrance and celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and looks forward to his coming in glory.
- Sunday is the day of celebration of Jesus' resurrection and we are invited to celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday with the Catholic community.
- Important Terms:
 - Eucharist: thanksgiving to God
 - Sacrifice of the Mass: Jesus death and resurrection made present
 - Real Presence: the risen Jesus truly present among us
 - Holy Communion: uniting us with God and one another in the community of the church
 - Mass: celebration of the Eucharist from which we are sent out to live the Gospel

Basic Practical Points

- Because the Eucharist is Jesus sacramentally present, we show a special reverence and respect towards everything surrounding the Mass. This means displaying quiet and calm in the Church, not distracting others by talking or loud behaviour, and using the time to pray and offer our lives, our concerns, and our prayers to Jesus.
- We are to abstain from eating one hour before receiving Holy Communion as a sign of our Eucharistic hunger.
- The Church recognizes two ways of receiving the Eucharist:
 - On the tongue: Before receiving the Eucharist, make a bow, respond "Amen" to the priest's proclamation, "The body of Christ," open mouth wide for priest to place host on the tongue, and consume the Eucharist quickly.
 - On the hand: One's hands should be clean, as one would make a throne for Jesus, our King. Before receiving the Eucharist, make a bow, hold out one's hands (left hand on top, right hand supporting it beneath), respond "Amen" to the priest's proclamation, "The body of Christ" and gently pick up the host with the right fingers and place immediately in one's mouth.
 - The Eucharist should never be touched or removed when it is in one's mouth, nor should it be nibbled slowly or dipped by the communicant in the chalice before consuming it.
- After receiving Communion it is appropriate to return to the pew to say a private prayer, welcoming Jesus, thanking him, telling him of one's love, and asking for his help.