

First Holy Communion Notes for Parents.

Home Project: Banner Due at the Children's Retreat

Each participant is asked to complete a banner as a home project. Participants are asked to look for important symbols and ideas as they complete the workbook. Together with their name these symbols should be incorporated into a banner to be displayed at St. Paul's. The banners will be hung in the nave. They should be made of fabric not paper and no smaller than 8.5x11 inches & no larger than 12" x 24". If you are looking for more ideas than presented to you, google First Communion Banners for all kinds of inspiration. (Please put the child's full name, school, grade and classroom on the back of the banner.) Examples of banners will be available to see at the Parent Information Night.

What to wear? Regarding appropriate dress for First Communion, we ask that your child wear their 'Sunday best' for this very special celebration. We do not request or emphasize the need for girls to wear white dresses and veils or boys to wear suits. If these garments are part of your family tradition you are welcome to include them in the celebration but they are not essential. Young ladies wearing white gloves are reminded to remove them prior to receiving the Eucharist

Helping with First Communion Preparation: Some Thoughts for Parents

At the last Supper when Jesus broke the bread and passed it to his friends, He said, "Take this all of you, and eat it: This is my body which will be given up for you." Next, he passed a cup of wine around the table for His friends to share. "Take this, all of you, and drink from it," he said. "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven." Then Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me." Jesus did not mean that the sharing of the wine and the bread would be a simple ceremony of remembering, as we remember a departed friend with toasts and tributes. He promised His very life in this bread and wine. In the Eucharist, Jesus becomes truly and fully present to us under the appearances of bread and wine. He shares all of Himself with us - the life He lived, the life He won by His death and resurrection, and the glorious life He has promised when He comes again. Soon your child will join your family and God's family at the Lord's Table for the very first time. He/she will eat the Bread of Life. Your child in his/her First Communion preparation is learning what a wonderful gift Jesus has given us in the Eucharist.

Sign of the Cross: You can support this learning by expressing your own appreciation of the wonder and the mystery of this glorious gift and explain that as we enter the church, we make the family sign, the Sign of the Cross. Ask your child if he/she knows or can guess why the cross is our family sign. Remind the child that Jesus by His death on the cross won the life that he/she will share in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, life that goes on forever, even after we die. Encourage the child when he/she dips into the holy water and signs himself/herself with a cross to think of the holy water of Baptism that makes us members of God's family. Point out that just as we wash our hands before eating a family meal, blessing ourselves with holy water helps

us to remember that before receiving Jesus, our spiritual food, our souls should be cleansed of sin.

Increase participation at Mass: Talk about the fact that at family meals people talk to one another. Then explain that during Mass we have a family conversation too. We talk to God, for example, in the opening greeting, the penitential rite, the Gloria and the alleluia, and when we praise Him. Encourage your child to join in these prayer responses as much as possible, to talk and sing to God. Focus on increasing participation gradually; linking it to what you are doing at home so that it becomes familiar and comfortable to your child.

The Memorial Acclamation: The Memorial Acclamation is another important Mass prayer that you should invite your child to pray along with you: "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." This prayer expresses the very heart of our faith: the sacred mystery that makes it possible for Christ to be with us in the Eucharist.

Penitential Rite: Stress the importance of what happens at the penitential rite of the Mass. We are sorry for our sins and we forgive one another. Draw on your child's experience of meals at home to help him/her understand what is happening and to join in. Talk about a time when a meal was spoiled because people were crabby or angry with each other and how happy a meal was when everybody was getting along well. Then explain that the same thing happens in God's family and that is why we have this time in the Mass for asking and giving forgiveness. It is a special time for getting our hearts ready to eat at the Lord's Table. Because Jesus came to share Himself with us, we especially want to have love and peace in our hearts for one another. When you are at Mass with your child, you might call his/her attention to the penitential rite and encourage him/her to join in the responses.

Liturgy of the Word: Ask if your child knows the special time when we hear God's words at Mass. Then discuss the fact that God speaks to us in the words that the priest and the lector read to us from the Bible.

Liturgy of the Eucharist: At special meals you decorate your family table with flowers and candles and a nice tablecloth and dishes. Tell your child that God's family does the same for this very special meal in which Jesus comes to share all of Himself with us. There is a fresh, clean altar cloth on the family table, flowers, and candles and special dishes and cups, and food that will become the most wonderful food that we can share - food that will make it possible for us to meet God someday face to face. Use the term "Liturgy of the Eucharist" once you have covered this at home.

Sign of Peace: Prepare your child for the Sign of Peace by pointing out that not only do we talk to God and listen for God to talk to us, but that there is a special time when we share greetings with the other members of God's family who have gathered with us to share the Eucharist. Explain that in exchanging the sign of peace, we show Jesus that we want to love one another as He loved people.

Holy Communion: What an awesome gift Christ gives us in the Eucharist! Receiving Christ for the first time should have a lasting effect on the direction of your child's life. You can help that happen not only by receiving Communion with your child (or as a nonCatholic by coming forward to receive a blessing) at the First Communion Mass, but by continuing to attend Mass and receive the sacrament or blessing afterwards. Just as importantly, express openly your appreciation and joy in this gift with your family. Preparation is learning what a wonderful gift Jesus has given us in the Eucharist. You can support this learning by expressing your own appreciation of the wonder and the mystery of this glorious gift. The best preparation for First Communion Day that you can give your child is regular attendance at Mass. Talk to your child about the Mass before you go and at appropriate moments in the celebration when you are in church together. Link what you have been doing together at home with what is happening at Mass. Emphasize the Mass as God's family's celebration and meal.

Final Comments: The parish prays for your children and your family during this time of preparation. It is our heartfelt desire that the presence of Jesus will touch your lives in a special way. We are always available to answer your questions and concerns. Please feel free to contact us whenever you need assistance.



Who Can Doubt The Real Presence? On the evening of the last day of his October 1995 visit to the United States, Pope John Paul II was scheduled to greet the seminarians at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. It had been a very full day beginning with Mass followed by a parade through downtown streets, a visit to the Basilica of the Assumption; lunch at a local soup kitchen run by Catholic Charities; a prayer service at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen and finally a quick stop at St. Mary's Seminary. The schedule was tight so the plan was to simply greet the seminarians while they stood outside on the steps. But, Pope John Paul made his way through their ranks and into the building. His plan was to first make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. The security personnel quickly flew into action ahead of the Pope. Their activities included a sweep of the building, paying closest attention to the chapel where he would be praying. For this purpose highly trained dogs were used to detect any persons who might be present. The dogs were trained to locate living people in collapsed buildings after earthquakes and other disasters. These sensitive and eager canines went through their rounds in the halls, offices and classrooms quickly and were then sent into the chapel. They went up and down the aisles, past the pews, and finally into the side chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Upon reaching the tabernacle, the dogs sniffed and whined and pointed, refusing to leave. They were convinced that they had discovered Someone there and firmly remained, until called out by their handlers. Yes, we Catholics know they were right; they found a real, living Person in the tabernacle!