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# I Belong to a Community

## Chapter 5

### Lesson 1

#### Objectives

1. The children will recognize they belong to the Church.
2. The children will recognize that members of their parish share faith in Jesus.
3. The children will recognize that Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are Sacraments of Initiation.
4. The children will appreciate their own Baptisms.
5. The children will participate in a prayer ritual that celebrates the beginning of their preparation for First Eucharist.

#### Overview

First Eucharist is for most Catholics an unforgettable day. It is a benchmark moment in every Catholic's journey into full membership in the Church, the community of faith. Eucharist is one of three Sacraments of Initiation into the Church.

Baptism welcomes new members into the Church and bathes us in the waters that signify the life-giving power of Jesus' Death and Resurrection to new life. Confirmation seals us with the gift of the Holy Spirit and strengthens our bond with the Church. First Eucharist brings Catholics to share for the first time the Body and Blood of Christ, the regular nourishment of the Church—the heart and summit of the Church's life (CCC, #1407). *Together in Jesus* emphasizes that the child who is preparing for First Eucharist belongs to the Church, a community of believers.

Usually, young Catholics receive First Eucharist as second graders. They have reached the age of reason and can understand that the food we share in the Eucharist is not the same as ordinary bread and wine. Their preparation for First Eucharist only begins an

understanding of the sacrament. They each have a lifetime for opening themselves to Jesus' loving gift of himself and our call to be his Body in the world—the Church.

#### Preparation

1. Have a chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and markers in your classroom or meeting space.
2. Have activity boxes ready for the children to use. Include in the boxes: pencils, crayons, colored markers, tape, glue, scissors.
3. Have available short lengths of yarn.
4. The prayer ritual calls for giving the First Eucharist group a Bible. We recommend a children's Bible, but any Catholic edition of the Bible will do. Catechists should prepare a place to open and display the Bible in the class area.
5. Duplicate enough copies of the Our Father poster, page 17, for each child. Prepare eight-inch pieces of yarn for tying each Our Father prayer into a scroll for handing out at the prayer ritual.
6. Option: Consider having available a bowl of water, a saucer of vegetable oil with a drop of perfume, and a loaf of bread, the signs of the three Sacraments of Initiation, for the First Eucharist children to touch and experience as they explore these sacraments in this lesson.
7. Enlist parents in taking turns preparing a healthful treat for the children. Be sure to check for food allergies.
8. Have the words to the gathering song on a sheet of newsprint.

#### Preparing the Prayer Ritual

The prayer service that concludes this lesson includes a part for parents. Celebrate this prayer ritual at the end of the children's first lesson in your class

space. Invite parents to come. Share treats afterward.

#### Opening Prayer

8 minutes

1. **Create a prayer corner in your space where your group can display the Bible and gather to pray.** Gather the children in the prayer space. Explain that they will have a prayer celebration with every lesson as they prepare for First Eucharist.
2. **Sing "Come to Jesus' Table" to the tune "Are You Sleeping?"** Have each child take a turn saying his or her name at the last line of the song, "Here comes \_\_\_\_." The song will form both a prayer and an introduction among the children.

*Come to Jesus' table.*

*Come to Jesus' table.*

*Share his food.*

*Share his love.*

*We are getting ready.*

*We are getting ready.*

*Here comes \_\_\_\_.*

*Here comes \_\_\_\_.*

#### 3. **Pray with your group in words such as:**

*Children, our parish community invites you to come to Jesus' table and share the food that Jesus made special signs of his love for us. You belong to a community of Jesus' followers. All the people of our parish are Jesus' followers. Jesus, please watch over these children as we prepare together for their First Eucharist.*

**All: Amen.**

# I Belong to a Community

First Eucharist 1, page 1, 10 minutes

## Objective

The children will recognize they belong to the Church.

- 1. Gather in a semicircle.** Distribute the children's copies of *Together in Jesus*, First Eucharist Preparation 1.
- 2. Introduce the program and the lesson.** Hold up the lesson cover. Read the title aloud. Have the children look closely at the photo. Discuss what is happening in the photo. Ask:
  - What is the place these people are in? *Church*
  - Who might these people be? *Children in a First Communion group.*
  - What are they doing? *Singing.*
  - What special purpose has brought them together? *They are followers of Jesus. They join with Jesus to offer praise and thanks to God.*

- 3. Read the text aloud at lower right.** Have the children read along using their own copies. Ask the question: Who have these people come to remember and celebrate? *Jesus.* Ask the children to recall stories about Jesus they remember from going to church.

# We Share Faith in Jesus


First Eucharist 1, page 1, 10 minutes

## Objective

The children will recognize that members of their parish share faith in Jesus.

- 1. Explain to the children how important their First Eucharist is to everyone in the parish.** Tell them that their parish community gathers to remember and celebrate Jesus, too. Ask them to name some of the people they know who belong to their parish community. They may name relatives, neighbors, teachers, and friends.

**I Belong to a Community**



**We Share Faith in Jesus**

*Interview a person in your parish community. Ask this person to finish the statement below.*

**I believe in Jesus because**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**T**he people of our parish believe in Jesus. Together we form a community of believers. Our parish is part of the Catholic Church. My parish community invites me to make my First Eucharist with them.

Come, \_\_\_\_\_, to Jesus' table.

Conclude that these people have been believing in Jesus for a long time and that the children are growing up in a community of believers.

- 2. Ready the children to interview a parishioner.** Direct their attention to the section on page 1 under the photo. Have someone read the title, "We Share Faith in Jesus." Then read aloud the italicized words and explain they are to interview someone in their parish and ask them to complete the sentence, "I believe in Jesus because...." They are to write what the person says on the lines and write in the person's name. The children can interview a parent, a

grandparent, a neighbor, or anyone a child knows from the parish community. This is a good time for children to meet someone special. If the children in your parish have prayer partners, they can interview their prayer partners. Help each child to think of someone. The children can visit these people or call them on the phone. Conclude by saying it is important to know that others believe in Jesus.

- 3. Have the children bring their completed interviews to share during your next session together.**



# I Belong to the Catholic Church

First Eucharist 1, pages 2-3, 20 minutes

## Objectives

The children will recognize that Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are Sacraments of Initiation.

The children will appreciate their own Baptisms.

**1. Introduce the three Sacraments of Initiation.** Have the children bring their booklets and gather around you in the open area. Read aloud the title and the sentences at the top of page 2. Elaborate on the first sentence. Use the photos to introduce the three sacraments. Explain in a simple introductory way that Jesus welcomes and gives us new life in Baptism; Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit in Confirmation; Jesus nourishes us in Eucharist.

## Baptism

**2. Focus on Baptism using the photo on page 2.** To personalize the experience of journeying through the Sacraments of Initiation, use one of the children in your group as an example.

**a. Imagine** (Joseph) comes home from First Eucharist preparation and says to his mother or his dad, "Do you know I belong to another family besides ours?" What family do you think your friend might be talking about? If one of his parents says, "Yes, you belong to the whole big family of God," is this answer right?

**b. Imagine** (Joseph) says, "Did you know that everyone went to church to welcome me, but I was so little I can't remember?" What will his parents say? Perhaps something like "Yes, I remember. It was a special day for us. Your grandparents were all there, and so were..."

Ask who might be at a Baptism. Family, godparents, people of the

# I Belong to the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is a community of people who follows Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's Son, who became one of us to show us God's love. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah for whom the people of Israel waited.

We become members of our Church by receiving three Sacraments of Initiation. These sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. We receive grace in these sacraments. *Grace* means gift. We receive the gift of sharing God's life and love in these sacraments.

## Baptism



**A**t Baptism parents ask members of the Church to welcome their child. They want their child to grow up as a follower of Jesus. A priest or deacon pours water over the baby's head and says, "\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Parents promise to teach their children all that Christians believe. In Baptism we become children of God. We share the life of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Find the sticker showing a shell and water. Put it here.

## My Baptism

I, \_\_\_\_\_, became a child of God and member of the Catholic Church when I was baptized on \_\_\_\_\_ at the church named \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

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**parish.** Ask who has seen a Baptism. Ask about details he or she noticed.

**c. Give the children time to examine the Baptism photo closely and tell you about everything they see—the special dress, the font, the candle, the parents, sister, priest.**

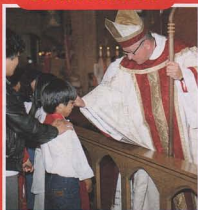
**d. Review what happens in Baptism by reading aloud the sentences next to the photo.** Pantomime the action of pouring water on the child's head.

**e. Have the children find the shell and water sticker to place on page 2.** Ask them to explain the symbols.

*Water stands for baptism and new life. The shell is used to pour water on a baby's head.* Have them write their full names in the blanks of *My Baptism*. Direct the children to have their parents at home fill in information they do not know.

**f. Take your group to see the baptismal font in church if it is near your class site.** Demonstrate how the priest or deacon pours water on a child's head.

## Confirmation



**C**onfirmation completes Baptism. A bishop seals us with the gift of the Holy Spirit. God pours out the Holy Spirit on us. The Holy Spirit urges us to love people the way Jesus showed us. The Holy Spirit makes Christians one.

with the children and show them how to hold their hands. This is an opportunity for children to see, touch, and taste the unconsecrated hosts or bread your parish community uses in the Eucharist.

**b. Read aloud the text around the Eucharist photo.**

**5. Ask the children who they know has received Confirmation.** Have them look closely at the photo.

**a. Explain in Confirmation** the bishop or a priest he designates prays for the Holy Spirit to come upon us and then marks our foreheads with a special oil in the shape of a cross as he says, “\_\_\_\_, be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Have a saucer of vegetable oil and anoint the children’s foreheads with it to demonstrate the bishop’s action in Confirmation. Point out that this is just regular cooking oil and not the special oil used by priests and bishops in Baptism and Confirmation.

**b. Write the words *Christ* and *Christians*** on the chalkboard or newsprint. Explain that *Christ* means *anointed*. To say that *Christ* is anointed means that he has come with a special mission to save and redeem us.

**c. Read aloud the text next to the Confirmation photo.**

## Eucharist



**J**esus made himself an everlasting gift for us when he loved us unto Death on the Cross. God raised him up to new life. Before he died, Jesus asked his followers to gather and share a meal to remember him.

At every Eucharist we gather as Jesus asked. A priest leads us in a prayer of remembering and giving thanks. *Eucharist* means *thanks*.

We remember and give thanks for Jesus’ gift of himself on the Cross.  
We remember and give thanks that God raised Jesus up to new life.  
We remember how Jesus blessed bread and wine on the night before he died.  
He made bread and wine signs of his love for us that he lived out on the Cross. Jesus comes to us in every Eucharist.  
We receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

**3. Ask what step a Catholic takes next in becoming a full member of the community of Jesus’ followers.** What is the next celebration after Baptism? Accept either *Eucharist* (*Holy Communion*) or *Confirmation*.

**Note:** Practice today varies according to diocesan policy on when children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Some receive it before First Eucharist in keeping with the order in which the Early Church celebrated the three Sacraments of Initiation. Other children receive Eucharist as second graders and Confirmation in their teen years. Do

steps 4 and 5 in the order your group mentions the next sacrament.

## Confirmation and Eucharist

**4. Write the word *Eucharist* on the chalkboard or newsprint.** Make sure the children realize that First Eucharist or First Communion is the name for the first time they will share the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass.

**a. Have the children look closely at the photo.** Pantomime what the priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion does in giving people the Body of Christ. Pantomime

## We Gather and Celebrate

First Eucharist 1, page 4, 10 minutes

### Objective

The children will participate in a prayer ritual that celebrates the beginning of their preparation for First Eucharist.

**1. Invite the children to remember their own life journeys.** Have them return to their work area. Direct them to look at the drawing on page 4. Have them use the five scenes to remember and share events that have happened as they have grown up. Encourage them to tell special things about themselves as you go through the scenes.

- What do they know about their Baptisms?
- What do they know from their families about learning to walk or talk when they were very little?
- What beautiful things such as the butterfly do they remember noticing?
- What do they remember about friends and things they did together?
- What do they remember about starting school?
- Ask them to draw themselves receiving First Eucharist in the blank scene frame.

**2. Have the children color their Our Father scrolls.** Write each child's name on the blank. Help them roll and tie the posters with yarn. Have them write their names on the outside of the scroll lightly in pencil. Collect them and put them near a Bible where you can hand them out during the prayer ritual.

**3. Rehearse how your group will celebrate the We Gather and Celebrate prayer ritual.**

If you plan to do this at the end of the lesson, show the children where to stand or sit in a circle. Point out the *Leader* and *Children* sections in the prayer service, and how the *Children* parts are read in unison. Plan on being

## We Gather and Celebrate

**Leader:** Children, do you wish to prepare for First Eucharist?

**Children:** Yes. Our parents have taught us how much God loves us. We are old enough to hear what Jesus asks of his followers.

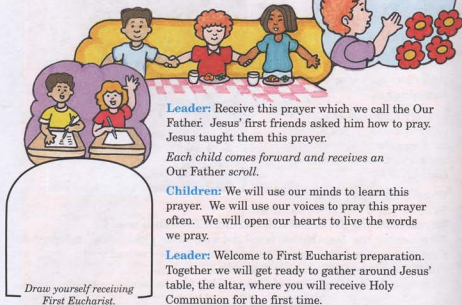
**Leader:** Parents, we invite you to bless your children.

**Parents:** We bless you in your growing up and in your preparing for First Eucharist.

**Leader:** Children, receive this Bible. The Bible tells many stories about Jesus, his Father, and the Spirit. You will take parts and tell Bible stories as you prepare for First Eucharist.

*Class representative receives the Bible.*

**Children:** We will use our eyes to read the stories about Jesus. We will use our ears to hear all Jesus asks. We will use our bodies to act out the stories.



*Draw yourself receiving First Eucharist.*

**Leader:** Receive this prayer which we call the Our Father. Jesus' first friends asked him how to pray. Jesus taught them this prayer.

*Each child comes forward and receives an Our Father scroll.*

**Children:** We will use our minds to learn this prayer. We will use our voices to pray this prayer often. We will open our hearts to live the words we pray.

**Leader:** Welcome to First Eucharist preparation. Together we will get ready to gather around Jesus' table, the altar, where you will receive Holy Communion for the first time.

the leader. Encourage parents to come. If no parents can attend, do their part. Explain that you are standing in for the children's parents.

**4. Celebrate the We Gather and Celebrate prayer ritual.**

Children need a moment of silence before beginning. Reverently celebrate the prayer service.

**5. A parish may choose to have children presented at Sunday Masses.**

## Taking Home the Lesson

Remind the children to interview a member of the parish and to ask their parents to help them complete the Baptism information on page 2.



# Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
Amen.



At every Eucharist, your parish community, just like all Catholics around the world, prays the Our Father, the prayer Jesus taught us.

\_\_\_\_\_, pray the Our Father every day, so you will be ready to pray with your parish community on the day of your First Eucharist.

*Display your Our Father poster at home.*