

Dear Parents,

*First Communion* — this day is important because of what we call it: *first*. It's the *first* of many, the *first* of a lifetime of coming to the Eucharistic table with God's family for your child. Although there are many things you are doing right now, it is just a beginning. Don't stop — your relationship with God, your child's friendship with Jesus, will just continue to grow.

What a graced time this is. Our lives today can be very busy. Try to slow these days down to find unique God-time for your child with your family. Eucharist is the heart of our lives as Catholics. Recently a non-Catholic college student went to liturgy with his Catholic friend and had many questions. One comment: "If I believed what you Catholics believed about Eucharist, you couldn't keep me away."

Our God loves us so unconditionally that he comes close to us in such a profound gift that it can never be returned, a gift that changes our lives — his life, a life of grace which calls us to see God in all things. Our only response is a life of gratitude that overflows in care and service for others.

As you grow, as you lead your child closer to Jesus, keep this poster near your dinner table (meals are so important). Take time each day to use the ideas for family conversations, prayer and Eucharistic living. (Include the whole family, not just the child preparing for First Communion.) Then, continue after *First Communion*.

## Ways to Use the Poster

**How We Receive:** Practice with your child so she/he is very comfortable with the ritual and can focus on the celebration of receiving Jesus.



**Let's Think About the Last Supper:** "I wonder" questions invite children to place themselves into the story and become engaged rather than just answer factual questions.

**The Eucharist is About...** In this section, you will find themes/some of the basic meanings of our Eucharistic celebration. They are accompanied by questions for family discussions; they are written so that they can be used more than once.

**Prayer at Our Family Table:** This prayer can be used at each dinner. At times it can be enhanced by:

- Lighting a candle
- A Scripture passage
- Your favorite song from Mass
- A moment of silent thanks
- Prayers of thanks
- Prayers of petition

### Ideas for Family Prayer

Choose a favorite prayer or phrase from the Mass (Gloria; Holy, holy, holy; etc.). Each day use one for family prayer.

Pray the Our Father and share a Sign of Peace each evening before bedtime.

During dinner invite each person to mention one thing from the day for which they are grateful.

During dinner, invite each person to mention two people (or groups of people): someone close to them, and someone whom they do not know but is part of God's family.

Compose a litany of petitions, similar to the general intercessions at Mass. Mention the people to whom you are united because you belong to the Family of God.

During dinner read the Last Supper passage (Luke 22:14-20). What would you have done and said if you had been there?

Invite each person to mention a time when they felt Jesus close to them.

Pray for parish members who are sick or deceased. Pray for the catechumens who are preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation.

## Grace in Action

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that celebrating Eucharist commits us to the poor (No. 1397). Together fix a meal for a neighbor in need, sort through toys and clothing for gifts to the poor, visit a nursing home, add family money to a charitable donation.



## Meal Time Thoughts

The Eucharist is the family meal of God's family; wonderful experiences of family meals are important for children (for all kinds of reasons). Try some of these practices:

- Take turns saying something you're thankful for or happy about that involves another family member.
- Turn off the TV and don't start eating until everyone is present.
- If you can't eat together every night, check your schedules at the beginning of the week and schedule your calendar to include specific times when it can be a priority.
- On Sunday, the Lord's Day, make dinner special: candles, tablecloths, the "good dishes," special desserts, unique conversations, such as: If you had one special power, what would it be? What makes you happy? Sad?
- Have some special meals: an inside picnic, "everyone-has-part-of-the-preparation-dinner," breakfast when dinnertimes are busy, ethnic dinners, dinnertimes to celebrate special events (first snowfall, TGIF, first tooth out).

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## Things to do after First Communion — and on and on

**Celebrate the liturgical seasons:** Observe our Lenten rituals but remember that Easter lasts for fifty days, how will you celebrate that? Decorate your dinner table with colors/symbols of the current liturgical season. Celebrate baptismal, First Communion anniversaries, etc.

**Pray as a family** — often and as a natural part of family life: mealtimes, bedtimes, happy times, worrisome times, after an argument, when someone is in trouble, always on special occasions (Thanksgiving, birthdays, baptismal days). Make a family prayer box for your dinner table: prayers of the Church, your own prayers.

**Make Mass a family event.** Sit near the front. Point out one or two things each week to watch for. Talk about the homily on the way home. Before liturgy talk with your family about who they want to pray for during the general intercessions; and what they want to thank God for during the Eucharistic Prayer.

**Grow together in appreciation of God's Word.** On Saturday evenings, read the Scriptures you will hear at Mass. What is God saying to your family this weekend?

*Nilil Obst:* Reverend Michael Heintz, Ph.D.  
Genour Librarian  
*Imprimatur:* Most Reverend John M. D'Arcy  
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend  
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