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Together in Jesus is the name and purpose of this program, which prepares primary-age children for First Eucharist and First Reconciliation. In this edition, *Together in Jesus* also provides Confirmation preparation for children in parishes and dioceses that practice the restored order of the Sacraments of Initiation and confirm children before they receive First Communion.

Most children who use *Together in Jesus* are journeying into the Catholic Church through sharing the faith of their parents. They have been born into both the love and the faith of their families. When parents ask the Church to baptize their children, they promise to teach them to love God and to share the joys and hopes, the struggles and sorrows of their neighbors.

Children baptized as infants grow up experiencing the faith of parents and the parish community as their own. They absorb with their senses the sights, sounds, and smells of worship—the glow of candles, the melodies of praise, the warmth of handshakes of peace, the sounds of old and young on their way to Holy Communion. Their journey of faith is as gradual as growth itself.

At about age seven children reach the age of reason or discretion. At this age the Church welcomes children baptized as infants to complete their initiation in Confirmation and Eucharist. In addition, the Church wants children to have the opportunity for First Reconciliation before receiving First Eucharist. Usually children prepare in second grade for these growing-up moments in the family of God.

In Baptism a child makes Jesus' journey from death to life sacramentally. In Confirmation a child receives a special outpouring of the

Holy Spirit whom the risen Jesus breathed upon his disciples on Easter evening and sent upon his followers on Pentecost. Confirmation completes Baptism, just as the sending of the Spirit completes Jesus' mission.

The first two Sacraments of Initiation lead Christians to the Eucharist, the source of the Church's life, our continuing banquet at the table of the risen Jesus Christ. At First Eucharist the Christian community welcomes children to the sacrament that nourishes the Body of Christ in the world. They share with the community for the first time the Bread and Wine that is the Body and Blood of Christ. At seven children are old enough to recognize that this consecrated Bread and Wine is different from ordinary bread and wine.

Celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation gathers children together in Jesus. These sacraments welcome them into the community that loves and shares as Jesus taught and that continues his mission in the world.

Together in Jesus provides primary-age children a simple, eight-lesson preparation for Confirmation/First Eucharist in dioceses and parishes that want children sealed in the Spirit before the parish community welcomes them at Jesus' table. This sequence restores the original order in which the Church has initiated new members and makes the three sacraments clearly a unified movement into the mystery of Jesus' Death, Resurrection, sending of the Spirit, and continuing presence with us in the Eucharist.

The first *Together in Jesus* lesson introduces the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation,

and Eucharist. In Lesson 2 of *Together in Jesus Confirmation with First Eucharist*, the children explore the Holy Spirit's activity in creation, Israel's history, in Mary, in Jesus, and in Jesus' disciples on Pentecost, the day the Church began. In Lesson 3 they explore the sacramental sign of Sacred Chrism and the Rite and celebration of Confirmation.

In Lesson 4 the children explore how the Christian community remembers and celebrates Jesus in the liturgical year. Lessons 5-8 focus on First Eucharist preparation and how the Christian community remembers and celebrates Jesus in the Eucharist as he asked. These lessons invite children to dramatize the Gospel stories of Jesus feeding multitudes and eating the Last Supper with his friends, to connect their experience of family meals with Eucharistic meals, to do hands-on activities that involve them concretely in doctrinal concepts, to pray with other children, and to work with parents at home on parallel themes and activities.

Together in Jesus makes preparation for Confirmation and First Eucharist fun with stickers to highlight important concepts and with prayer celebrations and treats as the ending of each lesson. This program for preparation for Confirmation and First Eucharist recognizes that children preparing to complete their initiation into the Body of Christ are a community of believers who gather to pray, find friends, and reflect together on their experience and the Church's traditions.

Confirmation Is a Sacrament of Initiation

Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation, the second of the three sacraments through which people become full members of the Christian community. In the first centuries of the Church, most people became Christians as adults. The Church welcomed them into the community by baptizing, confirming, and bringing them to the Eucharistic table all in one unified rite at the Easter Vigil. The Vigil is the appropriate time for the Church to welcome new Christians because this night celebrates Jesus' own passage from death to new life.

From the first Pentecost, Christians have invited others to join them on their journey of faith. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. On that day, Peter and Jesus' other disciples preached to the many Jews in Jerusalem. They proclaimed that God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. Their fiery words touched the hearts of many hearers, who asked, "What should we do?"

Peter's answer describes a process of initiation into the new community. "Repent," Peter says, "and be baptized in Jesus' name, so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The 3,000 baptized that day devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:37-42). From the beginning, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit gather believers into the community that breaks bread, prays, and reflects on Jesus' teaching together.

As the Church grew, a process for initiating new members developed. This process is called the catechumenate, the formation of those preparing for Christian life. Catechumens shared the faith life of the community, its celebrations, and the living of the Gospels. During this time of coming to

faith, the Church prayed for and with the catechumens and celebrated the steps or stages of their faith journey with rituals of welcome and belonging.

Toward the end of their journey, usually in the last days of the Lenten season, the Church shared its Creed with the candidates. Finally, at the Vigil of Easter, the Church welcomed the candidates into the mystery of Jesus' Death, Resurrection, and sending of the Spirit by celebrating with them the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist.

In early centuries Christians were baptized by being immersed in water, signifying Jesus' Death. Their rising from the water signified rising to new life with Jesus. The new Christians put on white robes and received an anointing with the Holy Spirit—the sealing with the Spirit that is Confirmation. The Christians newly baptized in water and anointed with the seal of the Spirit completed their initiation by gathering with the community around Jesus' table to celebrate and share Eucharist.

A Brief History

As Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century, increasing numbers of people joined the Church. The Church also began to baptize infants. The Christian community in the West moved away from baptizing and confirming new members in a single celebration.

Through the centuries, the Eastern Church has continued to welcome new members, even babies, by celebrating all three sacraments as a unified rite. Priests have authority to baptize babies into Jesus' Death and Resurrection, to seal them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and let them participate in the Eucharist through receiving the Blood of Christ.

The Western Church, began to administer Confirmation separately from Baptism so bishops, who because of the large number of infant baptisms, could no longer baptize everyone, could at least continue to seal all new Christians in the Holy Spirit. As infant Baptism became the rule, the Church began to baptize babies all year long rather than only at the Easter Vigil.

In the early 1400s, the Church answered early Protestant reformers by making a rule that only priests could receive the Eucharistic chalice, eliminating the usual way babies received First Communion. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Jansenist movement, which exaggerated people's unworthiness and the corruption of human nature, led to infrequent reception of Holy Communion and delayed First Communion into the teen years.

In 1910, Pope Pius X lowered the age for First Communion to the age of discretion or reason, around seven years of age. This change did not affect Confirmation. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council called for the revision of the Rite of Confirmation to make clearer "the intimate connection of this sacrament to the whole of Christian initiation."

In the practice still common in the U.S. Church today, parents bring their infants to their local parish to be baptized. A priest or deacon baptizes them. In second grade a child prepares for and receives First Communion. Then in the early or late teens, the young person completes his or her journey into full membership in the community with the bishop's sealing in the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. This practice creates the perception that Confirmation, which like Baptism a Christian receives only once, is the culmination of the initiation process. But it is Eucharist, the ongoing source and sustaining font of Christian life, that actually completes Christian initiation.

In our time the Church has rediscovered and reestablished the ancient way of initiating new members.

Responding to the Second Vatican Council's call for reform, the Church approved the new Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in 1974. Today, Christian initiation follows the model faith journey this rite outlines.

Restoring the order of the Sacraments of Initiation restores their paschal character. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist draw the new Christian into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' Death, Resurrection, return to God, and sending of the Spirit.

In Baptism a Christian plunges into Jesus' Death and rises to new life, making the same journey Jesus made through death to new life. In Confirmation a new Christian receives the Holy Spirit, the Advocate whom Jesus first promises his disciples and then breathes upon them on the first Easter and sends upon them in fiery tongues on Pentecost. In First Eucharist, Christians share for the first time the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Holy Spirit in the Bible

In the Old Testament *ruah* is the word for Spirit. It means *wind* or *breath*. The *ruah* of God stirs the chaos at creation in Genesis 1:2 and brings to life the human being God shapes in Genesis 2:7. The *ruah* of God comes upon David, when Samuel anoints him king (1 Samuel 16:13). The *ruah* of God stirs prophets to speak and brings dry bones to life again in Ezekiel's vision of God's future for the defeated and exiled people of God (Ezekiel 37). The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary to conceive in her the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:35).

The Holy Spirit is as invisible and vital to us as breath. The Spirit is the giver of life, the One in whom we live, move, and have being. The Spirit coexists with our spirit in every moment of our lives.

Like wind, the Holy Spirit blows where it will (John 3:8). Like wind, we see the invisible Spirit in what and whom it moves and animates. Wind tells us how the Spirit acts. The Holy

Spirit knows no boundaries, generates power, makes waves, and invisibly animates all that is.

The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sends in his absence, is with us in every breath of our lives—in anguish and in joy, in regret and in success, in disgust and friendship. The Spirit remains in and with every Christian. The Spirit animates, befriends, and surrounds our world, our human community, our Church.

The Holy Spirit in Confirmation

Anointing with the oil of Sacred Chrism and laying on hands are the sacramental signs of Confirmation. Oil tell us how the Holy Spirit acts. Oil soothes, heals, strengthens, and holds together; it makes gears run smoothly. Oil flows and moves. The oil of Confirmation, Sacred Chrism, is perfumed, carrying a sweet smell that invisibly attracts. The bishop blesses this oil on Holy Thursday.

Israel anointed its kings with oil (1 Samuel 10:1). The name *Christ* in Greek means the *anointed one, the king, Messiah* is the word in Hebrew that means the *anointed one, the king*. To be anointed with Sacred Chrism at Baptism and Confirmation is to have the Spirit of God poured out upon us, to be anointed as kings, prophets, and priests were in Israel's tradition. At Jesus' own baptism, the Holy Spirit rests upon him, anointing him for mission.

In the Acts of the Apostles Peter lays on hands to bless believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gesture of raising hands over people's heads expresses both blessing and handing on. The gesture also expresses a calling down of the Spirit upon those for whom a bishop prays. In Confirmation, the bishop extends his hands over the candidates and calls for the gift of the Spirit. Representing the faith community, sponsors put a hand on the shoulder of a candidate for Confirmation to express unity. The community stands with this valued

Christian and welcomes him or her to full membership and ministry in the Body of Christ

Preparing Children for Confirmation

Usually, parishes that restore the order of the Sacraments of Initiation prepare children for both Confirmation and First Eucharist in second grade. The Rite of Confirmation puts the age for Confirmation at the same age as First Communion (#11). Canon law calls for celebrating Confirmation at "about the age of discretion." The Church allows national bishops' conferences to set a different age (canon #891).

In the United States the bishops' conference allows each diocese to deal with the question of age. Many dioceses celebrate Confirmation at a later age to allow for a more thorough and developed catechesis. Others prefer the restored order.

As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation introduces and welcomes children to life in the Holy Spirit. Receiving the sacrament does not require full understanding. The Sacraments of Initiation lead to Eucharist, to ongoing participation in the community's life, and to lifelong transformation in Christ and the Spirit.

Parents can use *Together in Jesus Confirmation with First Eucharist* to prepare their children for these sacraments at home. Or, parents can send their children to parish Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation classes and participate in their children's preparation by doing the activities outlined on the Family Focus Posters and by joining in meetings for parents.

Parents deepen their own understanding of these sacraments in helping their children prepare for Confirmation and First Eucharist. Experiencing their parents' faith is irreplaceable in children's religious awakening and growth (*General Directory for Catechesis* #226).

Eucharist Is a Sacrament of Initiation

In early Church tradition Eucharist was the third and culminating Sacrament of Initiation as it is again today in dioceses and parishes that restore the order in which children receive these sacraments. More commonly today, however, Eucharist is the second. Most children receive the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—over a period of 10 to 18 years, from childhood through adolescence. First Eucharist usually follows Baptism by seven or eight years; Confirmation most often follows Eucharist by another several years, occurring in junior or senior high.

This version of the *Together in Jesus* program prepares children for both Confirmation and Eucharist. It is for dioceses that preserve the order in which Christians in the early Church and adults today receive the Sacraments of Initiation.

At Baptism, adults in the early Church dipped under the surface of a pool of water, signifying their dying with Jesus, and then rose from the water, rising to new life with Jesus. The new Christians put on white robes and were anointed with the Holy Spirit—the Sacrament of Confirmation. Newly bathed in water and sealed with the Spirit, Christians completed their initiation by gathering with their new community around the altar table to share Eucharist.

Together in Jesus understands First Eucharist as a Sacrament of Initiation. For this reason, the program emphasizes that Eucharist is much more than a personal moment in one's relationship with God as an individual. First Eucharist is an important public and community event in which the community welcomes newcomers to the source and summit of its life—the Eucharist.

The Sacraments of Initiation, like all the sacraments, are public acts of

worship. The gestures of washing in water, laying on hands and anointing with oil, and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ are actions through which the present Church comes into being. Children become members of the Church through the Sacraments of Initiation and participating in the community's ongoing worship and work for charity and justice.

Building Up the Body of Christ

Sacraments are ritual actions that create real effects. Eucharist has the effect of creating a community that becomes the sign it celebrates—bread for the world and Christians committed to pouring out their lives in self-giving as Jesus did. The effect of Eucharist is communion. Through participation in Eucharist the Spirit is at work in us to build up the Body of Christ in the world.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reiterates the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the importance of the liturgy and especially the Eucharist. "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows" (CCC #1074). The *Catechism* therefore sees liturgy as the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. Catechesis must be linked to liturgical and sacramental activity, "for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for our transformation" (CCC #1074).

As does the *Catechism*, *Together in Jesus* sees the liturgy as public work, the original meaning of the word (CCC #1069). Praising God on Sunday is public work. The liturgy gives us the core rites for celebrating Eucharist and the other sacraments. But church environment, song and music, art and

color, symbols and windows, readers and dancers—all contribute to the public work of praising God together and the public work of continuing Jesus' mission in the world. Primary children are not too young to share the ministries that contribute to our Eucharistic celebrations. They can take up the gifts, pray petitions, create banners, pray common prayers with the congregation.

Liturgy, especially Eucharistic liturgy, is the action at which the Church is most itself—the Body of Christ. At Sunday liturgy children can experience the faith of the Church, which they have shared, along with the faith of their parents as they grow up. The Church "exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body" (CCC #752).

Together in Jesus anchors its First Eucharist preparation on parish liturgical life in which children hear the Gospel proclaimed, witness the community sharing the Body of Christ, and experience people's neighborly care and work in common for justice.

Calling Children to Jesus' Table

The young children who prepare for Confirmation and First Eucharist learn concretely. Their brains have not yet developed an abstract-thinking capacity. Primary-age children require sense-involving activities and hands-on experiences to begin learning what Catholics believe about Eucharist. They think in stories rather than concepts.

Together in Jesus is child-friendly. It invites children to use their concrete

thinking ability and capacity to understand and tell the key stories about Jesus that help us grasp what Eucharist means to his followers. The program puts Jesus' stories in reader parts, so the children can step into the shoes of disciples in the stories, talk and interact with Jesus in the drama, and bring this experience of participating in the story at their own level to understanding Eucharist.

Together in Jesus songs and prayer experiences provide concrete experiences of thanking, sharing, eating together, belonging, and celebrating.

Our public worship itself is a wonderful teaching experience because it involves the senses in so many ways. Liturgy lavishes on us images on banners, windows, and walls; symbols in stone and glass; vestments in seasonal colors; blessings with water and oil; laying on hands in compassionate touch; the taste of bread and wine; the melodies of sacred song.

All these concrete experiences fall like seeds into the lives of young children who regularly join their parents at parish weekend worship. These experiences can take root and transform our gift of life into an everlasting gift to God and for God's people.

The Church's requirements of First Eucharist children are simple and direct. According to the *National Directory for Catechesis* (pages 127-128), First Eucharist preparation should:

- Teach that the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples;
- Teach not only "the truths of faith regarding the Eucharist but also how from First Communion on... they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the People of God in the Eucharist, sharing the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters";

- Ensure that the baptized have been prepared, according to their capacity, for the Sacrament of Penance prior to their First Communion;
- Develop in children an understanding of the Father's love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ, and of the gift of the Holy Spirit;
- Teach that "the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ" and that "what appears to be bread and wine are actually his living body";
- Teach the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread;
- Teach the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species of bread and wine;
- Help children to participate actively and consciously in the Mass;
- Help children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner.

Connecting Parents and Parish

Parents and parish both have vital roles in preparing children for First Eucharist. Parents have the right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for this sacrament. Parishes have the obligation to prepare and welcome children into full membership in the community. Catechesis for First Eucharist is the joint ministry of parents, parish catechists, members of the parish, the pastor, and the director of religious education.

Parents can use *Together in Jesus* with ease to do their own preparation with their children at home. Or, parents can send their children to parish Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation classes and participate in their child's preparation through the at-home activities *Together in Jesus* provides and through joining in the special parish meetings for parents.

Parents will find that helping their child prepare for Confirmation and First Eucharist will deepen their own understanding and appreciation of the sacraments.

The faith parents share with their children is faith they share with the Christian community that reaches across 20 centuries and includes the living and the dead. In this community others can believe when we doubt and others persevere in prayer when we give up. Community is the usual form Catholic faith takes.

First Eucharist preparation calls parents to make second, third, and fourth Eucharist as important as first. The sign of this sacrament is eating, an activity humans require regularly. Gathering for Eucharist is the regular, ordinary way Christians nourish their commitment to Jesus and his way of life.



How to Use Together in Jesus

Program Components

For Children

Together in Jesus provides eight four-page lessons for preparing primary children for Confirmation and First Eucharist. These lessons include photos of family and parish life and powerful illustrations of Jesus' life and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Simply paging through these lessons will introduce parents and catechists to the scope of the *Together in Jesus Confirmation with First Eucharist* program. The themes of these lessons are:

- I Belong to a Community
- I Prepare for Confirmation
- What Happens in Confirmation
- Our Community Remembers Jesus
- Jesus Gathers People Together
- Jesus' Special Supper
- Our Community Shares a Meal
- My First Eucharist Book

Stickers accompany the eight children's lessons. In each of the lessons the stickers highlight main themes and important signs and symbols. Children must keep their sticker pages well preserved in their folders until the moments come in the lessons for affixing them in the proper place.

Teaching Guide For Parents

Each *Together in Jesus Confirmation with First Eucharist* folder contains two special four-page lessons for parents. *Questions Parents Ask About Confirmation* responds to the most common questions parents ask as they help their children prepare for Confirmation. *Questions Parents Ask About First Eucharist* addresses

concerns parents commonly have when they begin preparing their child for First Communion. These two handouts provide the focus and content for parent organizational sessions, either one for each sacrament or a single session covering both Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Each folder also contains two *Family Focus Posters*, one with at-home activities for exploring the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and a second poster with at-home activities to accompany lessons on Eucharist. On the back of each *Family Focus Poster* parents will find brief parent notes outlining help only they can provide for their child in his or her sacrament preparation.

Family activities help children recognize the experience of the Holy Spirit in their ordinary lives—in moments of awe, in the work of figuring out what is right, in respect for other people. The Confirmation *Family Focus Poster* provides a vehicle for family members to encircle the child to be confirmed with their own blessings in conjunction with the Christian community's prayer for the Spirit's blessings.

The family activities on the First Eucharist *Family Focus Poster* aim to connect children's experiences in their families with the experiences of joining the parish community in worship.

Interactive games that both parents and children can play to reinforce each lesson are now available online at pflaum.com/eucharist.

Teaching Guide For Catechists

The Teaching Guide for *Confirmation with First Eucharist* provides lesson plans for teaching the eight lessons to children. Either parents or catechists can use *Together in Jesus* to prepare children for Confirmation and First Eucharist.

The Teaching Guide annotates reproductions of the children's lessons with simple, step-by-step plans for teaching effectively. Each lesson provides opening prayers and concluding rituals for ending each lesson with a prayer celebration.

Together in Jesus incorporates its two lessons on Confirmation after Lesson 1, which introduces the three sacraments of initiation.

This Teaching Guide provides a special, restored-order registration form for combined Confirmation/First Eucharist preparation. The Teaching Guide also provides an Our Father handout for use in the parish rite of enrollment. Its wording enrolls children in preparing for both Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Parish Rite of Enrollment

Together in Jesus Lesson 1 concludes with a Rite of Enrollment. This rite marks Confirmation and First Eucharist as Sacraments of Initiation, gateways into full membership in the Christian community.

Ideally, the parish will celebrate this Rite of Enrollment for the children preparing for Confirmation and First Eucharist and for their parents at a Sunday liturgy after the Sunday Gospel and homily.

The Rite of Enrollment welcomes children to their preparation classes and provides them an Our Father scroll. In this action the community hands them the common prayer of Jesus' followers, one Jesus himself taught us, as their heritage. Such a Sunday celebration recognizes that Confirmation and First Eucharist is a parish event that calls everyone to pray and support these children in their preparation.

If a Sunday Rite of Enrollment does not fit parish liturgy plans, parents and catechists can still celebrate together the

Rite of Enrollment that concludes Lesson 1 and give the children their Our Father scrolls, which include a statement of acceptance into the preparation program.

Options for Using Together in Jesus

Together in Jesus is a ready-to-teach, high-interest program that either parents or catechists can use to prepare children for Confirmation and First Eucharist. The program itself may be either parent/home-based or catechist/parish-based. Parishes must work with parents to decide which of the following two options will be the most effective.

- 1. Parents are the catechists** of their own children in a home-based program.
- 2. Catechists can teach children** in a parish-based program with parents supporting their efforts with at-home activities and participation in child/parent celebrations.

If parents opt to be the catechists of their own children, the parish has the task of creating communal dimensions of the program to bring families together. In fact, the Rite of Enrollment and a parent night build in opportunities for parents to come together.

If parents opt to send their children to parish Confirmation and First Eucharist classes, they have the obligation of joining in the parent evening at the

parish, taking a turn contributing treats for the group, participating in the Rite of Enrollment, and doing family activities at home.

In either option, parents can nurture the faith of their children by receiving the sacraments, by praying, and by striving to live holy lives of sacrifice and charity.

With Good News for Children

The publishers of *Together in Jesus* also publish the *Pfbaum Gospel Weeklies Faith Formation Program*, which for second and third graders includes *Good News for Children*, a lectionary-based weekly. The 32 weekly lessons *Good News* provides for each of the Church's three lectionary cycles help children respond to all Jesus asks of them in the Sunday Gospels and provide broad background for children's sacrament preparation.

Through stories, dramas, prayer services, and hands-on activities, each *Good News* weekly invites young children to connect their evolving life story with the Gospel and its relevance to the purpose of their lives. By making the Gospel message their own, even at a young age, children grow more able not only to participate in Sunday worship but also to respond to Jesus' challenge to love others and help people in need.

Parishes that use both *Together in Jesus* and *Good News for Children* can

substitute the eight Confirmation and First Eucharist lessons for *Good News* for eight weeks and send *Good News* home for parents to use with their children. Or, they can take the opposite course. Parents can do *Together in Jesus* with their child at home while the parish program using *Good News* continues. The similarity of the formats will benefit children's sense of continuity.

Making Memories

Encourage your young people and their parents to make the outer folder and the lessons within part of a memory book. The first task is to make the folder truly the child's own by adding the child's photograph and name to the cover. Trim the photograph so it will fit the space provided. Slip the corners of the photo into the slits at the corners of the space. Then open the folder and tape the corners of the photo to the inside front cover. Put the name-plate sticker in the space provided. Add the child's name and that of the parish.

At the celebration that concludes the "lessons" part of the program, give students some time to sign each other's folder in the "companions" section on the inside back cover. In coming years these signatures will remind them of the people with whom they shared this very special time in their young lives.

Getting Organized

Each *Together in Jesus* lesson provides material for a one-hour class. Parents and catechists must set dates for holding these classes. Children usually prepare for Confirmation, First Eucharist, and First Reconciliation during their second-grade year.

Preparation for First Reconciliation must be separated from First Eucharist

preparation by a significant amount of time, so that children do not get the sense they must always receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before they receive Holy Communion. Typically First Reconciliation preparation takes place in the fall; Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation during the Easter season.

Chapter 3

Space for Learning

Together in Jesus works best with two kinds of space—an open area for gathering children to read, discuss, pray, sing, and move; and work stations at which they can make things, work in small groups, and read together. In

addition, there should be a prayer area with a displayed Bible.

Parents who teach their children at home have these same two kinds of space available. A couch or the living room rug makes a good space for reading and discussing. A kitchen table or a child's desk makes a good work station.

Story Circle

In classrooms catechists can arrange desks in a semicircle to help children see one another and discuss with ease. Children need to be close enough to see, hear, and participate in stories and discussion.

Children can also sit in a circle on the floor in the open space. Catechists need easy eye contact with each child. Consider collecting carpet samples for sitting on. Children sit cross-legged comfortably. Catechists and parents will need low stools or chairs.

Work Stations

Four desks pushed together—two and two facing—make ideal work stations for art projects, map study, and other small group work. Catechists can establish a routine for changing desks from work stations to the story circles.

Many catechists teach in someone's classroom and must return everything to its exact place when the lesson is over. Others hold class in a corner of the parish hall, in the parish kitchen, or in the parish church itself.

Primary children need a work place they recognize as their own. Ideally, a classroom will have desks or ample table space where children can work individually or together on activities. Catechists need room to move among children as they work. If ideal space is not available, here are some ideas for workable substitutes:

- Parish kitchen counters for stand-up work space
- Window sills for writing surfaces
- Card tables for small group work
- Fruit or canned goods boxes with one side cut out for on-the-floor work tables

- Lightweight fiberboard or cardboard which can be held on the lap

- In church, children can sit on kneelers and use pews as work tables

Prayer Space

Catechists and parents can make their story space into a special prayer space by laying out a small piece of beautiful cloth on the floor or on a table and adding a candle or things that are beautiful in nature such as leaves, flowers, rocks, or shells.

Catechists should establish a routine for gathering in a semicircle to begin class with opening prayer. Children can go directly to this space when they come to class. They can sit and talk quietly until all are gathered.

Display Areas

Displaying completed activities is a way of valuing children's work. Parents can display Confirmation and First Eucharist projects on refrigerators or family bulletin boards. Displaying children's projects in the back of church also keeps parishioners alert to what children are doing in their Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation.

Getting Acquainted

Children want to be liked and accepted and to find a secure place in the group. They need the security of knowing their way around. The following suggestions may help you and the children to feel more comfortable.

- Make name tags for the children to wear until you know each child and they know one another.
- Show the children the locations of the bathrooms, coat closets, exits.
- Introduce the children to the prayer space, their work tables, the discussion and storytelling circle, and tell them the kinds of things they will be doing in each place.
- Set up procedures for leaving the room, finding and returning materials, cleaning up.

Supplies

Parents and catechists who use *Together in Jesus* will need basic supplies for the children. These include scissors, writing paper, pencils, markers, crayons, glue, stapler, construction paper, transparent tape, masking tape, paper punch, pencil sharpener, boxes of crayons and markers, work folders, prayer-space items.

Large grocery carry-out boxes or file boxes make wonderful storage boxes for a catechist's regular supplies for an entire class. Parish DREs can store these boxes in a special place during the week, or catechists can keep them at home or in the trunks of their cars.

Children can keep their individual supplies in shoe boxes or small plastic cartons, or catechists can provide group boxes of scissors, markers, crayons, and pencils.

Clean Up

Cleanup is a job that gives children the opportunity to be involved and responsible. Make clear what has to happen at the end of class: collect materials, repack supply boxes/baskets, pass the wastebasket, arrange a neat pile of take-home materials. Each child then stands at his or her work place until all are ready.

Chalkboard

The chalkboard is a catechist's most valuable visual aid. Children learn best when they see as well as hear. Catechists can use a chalkboard to tell a story, to write, to make lists.

Newsprint can substitute for a chalkboard. You need an easel (or a chair) for stand-up display. Set up the easel in the center of your discussion area when you need it to make lists, take notes from the class, or draw to illustrate a point or story.

Class Time

Together in Jesus offers a variety of activities to keep primary children attentive. They can pay attention longer to hands-on activities than to verbal activities. They can follow and participate in a 10-15 minute listening/speaking activity. They can work at a supervised hands-on activity for 20 minutes.

Together in Jesus breaks the one-hour lesson into several parts. Children learn best when parents and catechists vary activities and involve them in seeing, hearing, touching, dramatizing, role-playing, creating. Always take time to look at illustrations of stories and Gospels. Create as many avenues for remembering as possible. Reinforce children's learning with song, dance, prayer, and visuals.



Prayers

Because Confirmation and First Eucharist are Sacraments of Initiation, parishes should expect children to know the common prayers of the community. The best way for children to learn their prayers is by praying them. Many children learn their prayers through praying them at bedtime or meal time over their growing up years. Most second graders will know the Our Father, Hail Mary, Prayer of Praise (Glory Be), Sign of the Cross, and Creed. But some may not.

Many children grow up unchurched. Sacramental preparation can be an important time for them to learn their prayers. The Rite of Enrollment gives children the Our Father to post and pray each day as a way to learn the prayer.

Prayers children should know are printed on page 62. Catechists can copy this prayer page and send it home with children. Request that parents hear their children say their prayers. Even children who know their prayers well sometimes don't have the words right because they have learned the prayers by rote when they were too young to know what the words meant.

The Flow of a *Together in Jesus* Lesson

Each *Together in Jesus* lesson follows a pattern. Each begins with an opening prayer. Each lesson has three or four parts using one or more pages of the child materials. Each lesson ends with a prayer ritual and treat.

Opening Prayer

Each lesson plan provides an opening prayer and song for the children. Parents and catechists should feel free to pray in their own words with children if they choose.

The songs are familiar tunes with words appropriate to the theme of the lessons. These songs appear only in the Teaching Guide, so lesson plans regularly suggest writing these words out on paper for the children.

Lesson

The Teaching Guide provides the objective and lesson plans for each page of the children's materials. Each new part of the lesson plan in this edition begins with the same title as it does on the children's page.

The Teaching Guide has clear objectives for each *Together in Jesus* lesson. Objectives are like road signs. They tell you where you are going and why.

The best preparation for teaching children is to read over the entire lesson plan. It details materials needed, objectives, questions, answers, movements, doing dramas—everything a catechist or parent needs.

Prayer Rituals

Each *Together in Jesus* lesson ends with a prayer ritual and treat. These prayer rituals are reproducible pages that parents and catechists will find at the end of the chapters of this guide. Catechists may copy these pages so each child has one.

These celebrations are vital to the *Together in Jesus* approach to preparing children for Confirmation and First Eucharist. In these celebrations the children pray together, eat together, sing together. They will see that they are a Christian community because they gather each time in Jesus' name. These rituals give them the experience of gathering together and praying together at their own age level.

Catechists will want to arrange with parents to take turns bringing the treats for the prayer rituals. Parents should always be invited to join in these rituals.

Confirmation/First Eucharist Registration



Name of child: _____

Parents: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

_____ received the Sacrament of Baptism

at _____ Church

on _____, _____
date year

We will provide a copy of our child's baptismal certificate.

Signature

Our family will participate in the Confirmation/First Eucharist program by



Nurturing Every Child's Gift of Faith

The Church values children's learning about Catholic tradition by participating in family and parish life. Children can complete the Sacraments of Initiation and become full members of the Church when they reach the age of reason.

In preparing children for Confirmation and First Eucharist, catechists and parents have to consider the concreteness of primary children's thinking and their ability to understand symbols. We want to share our belief that the consecrated Bread and Wine are the Body and Blood of Christ. We need to help children understand that this consecrated Bread is different from any other bread. However, the children don't observe any concrete change in the bread, so what can they make of what we tell them?

The best approach to helping the children begin to understand that they receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion is to teach them about the Church, the People of God, who gather around the risen Jesus.

The children can experience Eucharist as a celebration of believers who remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for them as a meal shared by friends and started by Jesus before he died, and as the sacramental way through which Jesus gives us his new life.

Second graders can only begin to understand that they receive the Body and Blood of Christ in First Communion. They must continue to share the faith of their parents and teachers. First Communion is a celebration of shared faith, of the parish together—young and old, parent and teacher—sharing and becoming the Body of Christ, the Church.

Parishes must provide second graders with the opportunity to receive First



Reconciliation before Confirmation and First Eucharist. This preparation needs to feature God's generous love and forgiveness, help young children distinguish loving and unloving actions, and stress Jesus' positive expectations of his followers. It should introduce the concept of sin.

The Church teaches that at seven or eight children reach the age of reason. They can begin to recognize right and wrong. This is their continuing work as their concrete-thinking ability helps them recognize cause and effect. First Reconciliation is only the first step in a lifelong call to conversion in the Church.

Participating in Worship

Taking children to church is an important ingredient in their initiation into the Church. Children are idealistic. They experience painful conflict when they want to attend Mass and parents don't or can't take them. Parish pastors and catechists need to dialog with

parents about Mass schedules that might better fit their busy lives or about a family Mass that features music and participation specially suited for children. First Eucharist should not be a child's only experience of joining the community around Jesus' table but should be the beginning of regular togetherness with the community that gathers in Jesus' name and shares a meal as Jesus asked.

Children can participate in Eucharistic celebrations long before they understand them fully; in fact, they learn through participating. The Church helps parents form children in faith through belonging to and participating in a worshiping, praying community.

The signs and gestures of the Church's rituals involve the senses and enact Jesus' healing, nourishing, forgiving actions among us. When a child experiences the worship of the Church in song, flowers, color, and time set apart, the ritual and the community become deeply rooted, emotional parts of their lives, which they can later reflect upon and understand.