

# Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>We Belong</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>We Gather</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>We Listen</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>We Give Thanks</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>We Remember</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>We Celebrate</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>We Live</b>	<b>54</b>
	<b>Celebrating the Mass</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>Receiving the Eucharist</b>	<b>73</b>
	<b>My Daily Prayers</b>	<b>74</b>
	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>Scripture Cards</b>	<b>81</b>
	<b>Certificates</b>	<b>85</b>

# We Gather

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
thank you for our  
church family.*





## *Sharing Together*

In the opening prayer we made the sign of the cross. We gathered together and walked in procession behind the cross. What was it like for you when you were following the cross?

Where do you gather with people?

The cross is a wonderful sign of Jesus' love for us. Give one example of a place where you see the cross.

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# The First Christians

Christians are followers of Jesus. The first Christians often gathered in one another's homes. Read this Bible story to discover why the first Christians gathered in one another's homes.

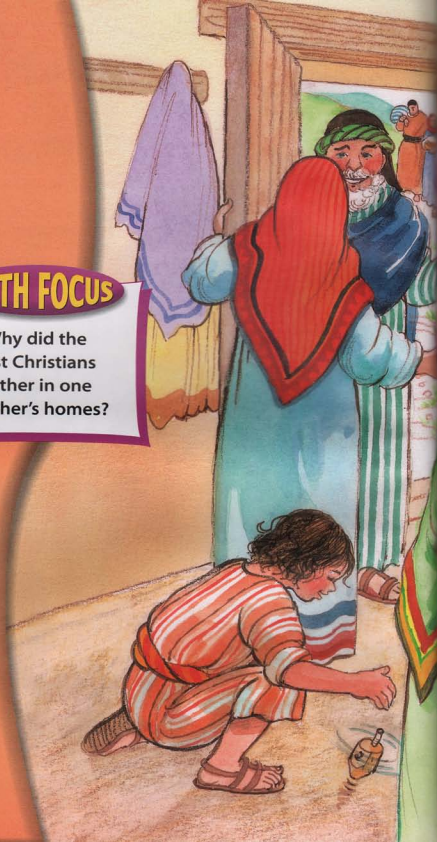
Many people were baptized and became followers of Jesus. They shared their food and everything they had. They helped one another live as Jesus taught them.

They spent time together learning about Jesus and praying together. They broke and shared bread with one another as the disciples did with Jesus.


BASED ON ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:41-47

## FAITH FOCUS

Why did the first Christians gather in one another's homes?







The first Christians  
gathered together.

When do you  
gather with your  
church family?

### TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Share the Bible story of the gathering of the first Christians. Then discuss responses to the question on this page. Explain that the first followers of Jesus had no churches to go to. Talk about why your family gathers at church each Sunday with other families who belong to your parish.

# Our Church Family

## FAITH FOCUS

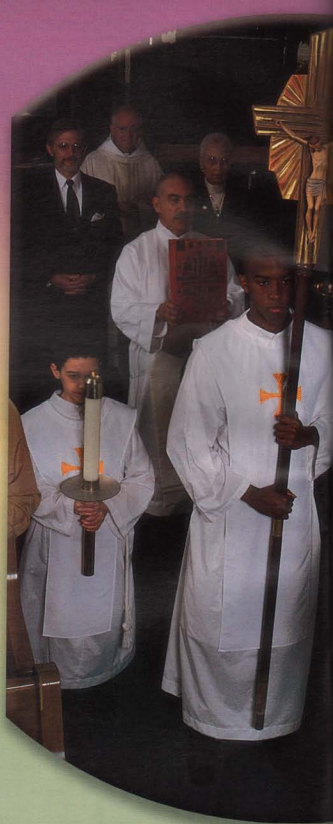
What happens  
at the beginning  
of Mass?

We gather as a church family. Our church family is the community of people who belong to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Church is the Body of Christ and the People of God. It is made up of people all over the world. Our church family also includes all the faithful members who have died.

## WHAT WE SEE AND HEAR

The people who gather for Mass are called the assembly. The priest who leads the assembly in celebrating Mass is called the presider. The priest wears special clothes called vestments. The color of the vestments reminds us of the season or feast of the church year.

Each Saturday evening and Sunday our church family comes together for Mass. The Mass is the most important celebration of our church family. At Mass we do what the first Christians did. We listen to God's word. We break bread. We receive Holy Communion. At the end of Mass we are sent out to live as followers of Jesus.





The priest leads our church family in the celebration of Mass. The Mass begins as the priest and other people walk in procession into the church. Everyone stands and sings a hymn. We remember that we all belong to our church family.

The priest greets us, saying, “The Lord be with you.” We respond, “And with your spirit.” We believe that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are present with us.

At Mass we worship God. We give adoration and honor to God. Together with Jesus we thank God the Father for his mercy. We praise God for his love. We ask God to help us live as his children. We are now ready to listen to the word of God.

**Why do we gather for Mass?**



### **TOGETHER AS A FAMILY**

Share responses to the question on this page. Remind your child that God is present with your family, right in your home. Use the words “The Lord is with you. And also with you” to begin family prayers and family discussions. Use “Celebrating the Mass” on pages 62 and 63 of this book to help your child learn the responses for the introductory rites of the Mass.



# What Difference Does This Make in My Life?

Each week on Sunday our church family gathers for Mass. We begin by signing ourselves with the sign of the cross.

Circle the names of the people you see at Mass.



priest

reader

altar server

choir

deacon

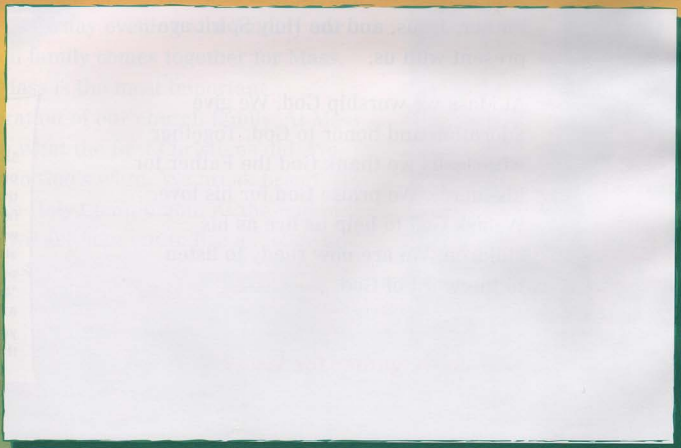
church family

song leader

## MY FAITH CHOICE

Talk with someone about one thing you will do this week that shows you belong to our church family.

Draw a picture of yourself and of the other people you see at Mass.







## Remembering Together

In this chapter your child learned about the first Christians. They gathered in their homes. They shared all things in common. They prayed together and cared for one another. This is a good time for you to talk with your child about your own parish community. Review with your child the names of:

- your church or parish community
- your pastor
- other special people you know at church



## Sharing Together

Choose one of the following activities to do together or design a similar activity of your own:

- The first followers of Jesus shared their food and other possessions with one another. Find out how your family can donate to a local food collection or shelter or parish service group that serves people in need.
- Find your family's photo albums. Look at the pictures and point out photos that show people following Jesus.

- Talk about ways your family can join in welcoming new members into your parish community. Then choose one thing that you will do together.



Visit the RCL Benziger sacraments web site by following the link titled "Sacraments" at [www.FaithFirst.com](http://www.FaithFirst.com).

## Praying Together

Pray this or a similar prayer at family meals or at other family prayer times this week:

Loving God, our Father,  
today we gather together in honor  
of your Son, Jesus Christ.  
Send us the Holy Spirit  
to help us remember to follow Jesus every day.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.



## Getting Ready Together

Use pages 62 and 63 of this book to go through the introductory rites of the Mass with your child. Review with your child the assembly's responses. This will help your child participate more actively and more fully in the celebration of Mass.

# Celebrating the Mass

Sunday is the main day for the celebration of the Eucharist. Sunday is the Lord's Day. It is the day of Jesus' resurrection.

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Holy Spirit calls us to gather as the community of the Church. The Church is the People of God, the Body of Christ. We gather with Christ and one another. We prepare to listen to the word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist.



## Entrance Procession and Gathering Song

We stand as the priest and other ministers enter the assembly. The priest presides over the celebration of the Mass. We sing a gathering song. The priest kisses the altar as a sign of reverence. The altar reminds us of Jesus and his love for us. The priest then goes to the chair where he leads us in praying the Sign of the Cross. We declare that Jesus is present with us.

## Greeting

**Priest:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**People:** Amen.

**Priest:** The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**People:** And with your spirit.

## Rite of Sprinkling with Holy Water

On some Sundays we are blessed with holy water to remind us of our baptism. We ask God the Father to help us be faithful to the Holy Spirit whom we have been given at Baptism. The Holy Spirit helps us live as children of God and followers of Jesus.

## Penitential Act

We admit our failures to live our baptism. We bless God for his mercy.

**Priest:** Lord, have mercy.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

**Priest:** Christ, have mercy.

**People:** Christ, have mercy.

**Priest:** Lord, have mercy.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

## Gloria

On some Sundays we praise God the Father and Jesus, the Lamb of God, for the grace given us by the Holy Spirit. We celebrate that we share in the life of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

**Gloria to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.  
We praise you, we bless you,  
we adore you, we glorify you,**

**we give you thanks for your great glory.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,**

**O God, almighty Father.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,**

**Lord God, Lamb of God,**

**Son of the Father, you take away  
the sins of the world, have mercy on us;**

**you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer; you are seated  
at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,**

**you alone are the Lord,**

**you alone are the Most High,**

**Jesus Christ,**

**with the Holy Spirit,**

**in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

## Opening Prayer

We observe a moment of silence. We remember that we are in God's presence. We lift up our minds and hearts to God. We remember what God has done for us. We ask God the Father to help us live as children of God and followers of Jesus. The priest leads us in prayer.

**Priest:** Let us pray . . .

**People:** Amen.

# Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word is always celebrated at Mass. God speaks to us. We remember the story of God's love for us. Christ is present to us through his own word.

## First Reading

We sit and listen as the reader reads from the Old Testament or from the Acts of the Apostles.



At the end of the reading the reader says:

**Reader:** The word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## Responsorial Psalm

The song leader leads us in singing a psalm. We make God's word our own.

## Second Reading

The reader reads from the writings of the New Testament, but not from the four Gospels. At the end of the reading the reader says:

**Reader:** The word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation

We show our reverence for Jesus, the Word of God. In Jesus, God most fully told us about himself and his love for us. We stand to honor Jesus present with us in the Gospel. The song leader leads us in singing "Alleluia." During Lent, we do not sing "Alleluia." We sing another Scripture verse.

## Gospel

**Priest**  
or **deacon:** The Lord be with you.

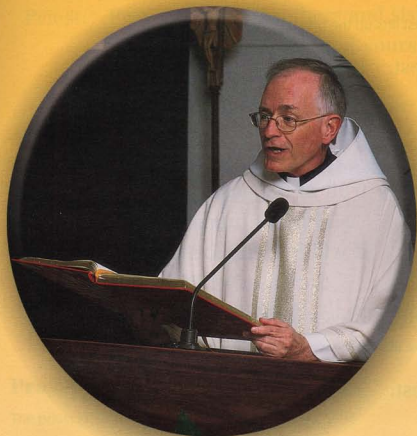
**People:** And with your spirit.

**Priest**  
or **deacon:** A reading from the holy gospel  
according to (name of gospel  
writer).

**People:** Glory to you, Lord.



The priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel.



At the end of the Gospel, he says:

**Priest  
or deacon:** The gospel of the Lord.

**People:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus  
Christ.

The priest or deacon then kisses the Book of the Gospels.

## Homily

The priest or deacon helps the whole community understand the word of God proclaimed to us. We choose ways to live as followers of Jesus.

## Profession of Faith

We stand and profess our faith. Faith is accepting God's invitation to believe and trust in him. We pray the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed (see page 72).

A creed is a prayer that tells what we believe. When we pray the Creed at Mass, we say that we believe in the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is the belief that there is one God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity helps us live as children of God.

## General Intercessions

The priest or deacon or another person leads us in praying for all people. We pray for the needs of the Church, for public authorities, for the salvation of the world, for people oppressed by any need, and for our local church community.

We can respond to each prayer in several ways. For example, after each prayer, we might respond:

**People:** Lord, hear our prayer.