

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 1

(Called to His Supper, pages 1-7)

Do you remember the day you brought your child to be baptized? Of course, you do, but perhaps you are wondering what your child's baptism has to do with preparation for first Holy Communion. Baptism freed your child from the power of sin, gave your child a new kind of life in Christ and called him or her into a special relationship with Christ and his Church. It was the first step in your child's initiation into the Catholic Church *and* it was the beginning of your child's journey toward first Holy Communion.

Your faith led you to bring your child to the Church to be baptized, and your faith has surrounded your child to this day. Your faith, and the way you live it in your daily life, will continue to have the greatest influence on your child's spiritual growth during preparation for Holy Communion — and for years after!



Baptism is where the journey  
to the Eucharist begins.

Part of today's lesson focused on the importance of the celebration of Mass for Catholics. Celebrating the Eucharist is at the heart of our Catholic faith. Regular, active participation in this celebration is vital for growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. It is also an essential part of your child's preparation for receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Much of what will be done in the classroom will build on his or her experiences of taking part in this Sunday celebration.

You can help make Mass a meaningful experience for your child in a number of sim-

ple ways — for example, by talking about the people you would like to pray for when you go to Mass; sitting where your child can see well; singing and responding to the prayers with him or her; and talking about the readings or the homily on the way home.

Your child's preparation for first Holy Communion is an opportunity to reflect on the value of the Mass for yourself. By committing (or recommitting) yourself to join the community for the celebration of the Eucharist each and every Sunday, you can help your child's first Holy Communion become an experience that brings him or her closer to Jesus. You will also open the door to countless blessings for you and your family.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

Include this verse from Psalm 36:10 in your mealtime prayer this week:

*For with you is the fountain of life, and  
in your light we see light.*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

At your family meal, talk about the different things that you do together as a family. As you talk with one another, invite family members to share their feelings about what belonging to a family means to them and what they like about being a family.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

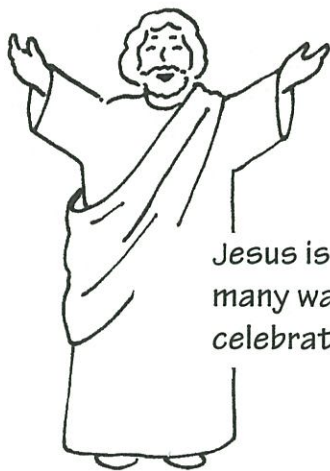
Look at some of the mementos of your child's Baptism — the pictures, the video, the certificate, the candle, the clothing. Tell your child about what happened when he or she was baptized, who was there and how you felt about bringing your child to be baptized. If your family has a Catholic tradition, let your child know about his or her Catholic roots. If not, tell your child why you became Catholic.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 2

(Called to His Supper, pages 8-13)

Helping children gain a basic understanding of what we do when we come together to celebrate Mass is an essential part of helping them prepare for first Holy Communion. Today's session introduced the children to the first part of the Mass — the Liturgy of the Word.

When we think of Jesus' presence at Mass, our thoughts usually turn to his unique and real presence in the Eucharist. While firmly upholding this belief, the Second Vatican Council made us aware of other ways in which Jesus is present at Mass. One of these is in the very people who gather.



Jesus is present in many ways when we celebrate Mass.

The Second Vatican Council also pointed out that Jesus is present in the priest who leads us in the celebration of Eucharist and in the Word of God that is proclaimed. When the readings are read by a person of faith, it is really Jesus who is speaking to us. Jesus also speaks to us through the words of the priest in the homily.

The Liturgy of the Word is one of the two major parts of the Mass. As your child listens to the readings week after week, he or she can develop reverence for the Word of God. Most important, your child can come to know, love,

and follow Jesus.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

For your family mealtime prayer, say the prayer that we say silently as the Gospel is announced:

*Christ, be in my mind; Christ, be on my lips; Christ, be in my heart.*

Trace a small cross on your forehead, your lips and your heart as you say the words.

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

At a family meal talk about some of the family stories that are told and retold at your family gatherings. Compare the stories your family tells with the stories that people long ago told about God and Jesus. These stories were told and retold and finally written down in the Bible. Talk about the importance of the Bible to people in the past. Remind your family that long ago the Bible may have been the only book that a family had. Tell them that the family Bible was often the place where marriages, births, and deaths were recorded.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

Set aside time to read one of your family's favorite Bible stories together — or read the Gospel for the next Sunday or the Parable of the Sower that was read in class (Matthew 13:18-23). When you are finished, invite each person to say what part of the story or reading they liked best and what it means to him or her. End your time together by placing your Bible in a special place of honor in your home.

*Note:* If you do not have a family Bible, this would be a good time to purchase one. The New American Bible is recommended, since the readings used at Mass come from it. Many good children's Bibles are also available.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 3

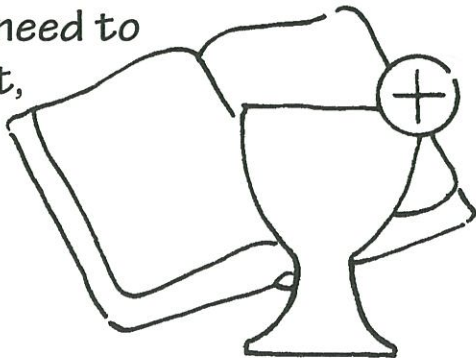
(Called to His Supper, pages 14-20)

Today's session began with one of the most familiar stories from the Gospels — the feeding of the multitude. On the surface, it is the story of a tremendous miracle — one that certainly must have made an impact on the disciples and anyone else present. In today's session, however, our attention shifted from Jesus the miracle-worker to Jesus the one who responded to the needs of the people. According to the Gospel of Mark (6:32-44), when Jesus saw the crowds he was moved with pity and began to teach them. Later in the day when they grew hungry, he fed them.

Although our lives are vastly different from the people who came to see Jesus, our basic needs are the same. We, too, need to be taught and we need to be fed. Today the children learned that one of the important ways that Jesus meets our needs is at Mass. He teaches us in the Liturgy of the Word and he feeds us in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He gives us what he alone can give, namely himself. He is the Word of God and the Bread of Life.

Besides leading us to trust in the Lord who loves us as much as he loved the people long ago, the story of the feeding of the multitude also has something to say to us about being Christian. We are called to follow Jesus' example by our sensitivity to the needs of oth-

**We, too, need to  
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and we  
need to  
be fed.**



ers — in our own families and beyond them. Jesus depends on us to reach out to the lonely, comfort the sick, care for the elderly, listen to those who are hurting, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and give of ourselves as he did.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

Include the following in your mealtime prayers this week:

*The hand of the Lord feeds us.  
He answers all our needs.*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

Name and talk about the different needs that all people have such as food, clothing, shelter, friends, education, jobs, health care. (It may be necessary to distinguish between what we need and what we want.)

Talk about how Jesus meets our needs through the help of other people and invite family members to think of examples of how they have been helped by others.

Point out that Jesus counts on us to help meet the needs of the people around us. Try to identify some of these people, what their needs are, and how your family might help them.



## **FAMILY PROJECT:**

Contact your parish outreach group or another organization that provides food assistance to the poor to find out what is needed. Talk with your family about these needs and invite everyone to contribute something toward purchasing the food items. Arrange a time for your family to shop for the items and to deliver the food to the appropriate place. When the food is delivered, pray with your family for the people who will receive your gifts and for all who need food.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 4

(Called to His Supper, pages 21-27)

What else holds as many memories as the family table? At the family table, we not only share our food, we share our very lives as we talk together, laugh, cry, tell stories, and spend time with one another. Eating together at the family table tells us that we belong and are loved. And, despite being less than ideal at times, family meals knit us together as little else can.



Each Sunday when we gather around the table of the Lord in celebration of the mystery of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we share a sacred meal. We come hungry and thirsty — and, perhaps, a little tired and worn — needing to be nourished, strengthened, and renewed in our commitment to follow in Christ's footsteps. At this table, we know that we belong and are loved; we know that we will be fed by Jesus himself.

Today's session helped the children explore their own experiences of eating with family and friends, learn about the meals that Jesus ate, discover the similarities between the family table and the table of the Eucharist, and become aware of some meanings of ordinary bread and wine.

As your child prepares to receive first Holy Communion, aside from participating in Sunday Mass regularly, the single most important thing that you can do to help your child gain an understanding and appreciation of the

Eucharist is to eat together as a family. What we do at home becomes a foundation for sharing the love of Jesus at the celebration of Eucharist.

In the recent past, eating together was taken for granted. But today, families frequently find it difficult. Although it may take special effort on your part, making family meals a priority will bring many benefits to your family.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

When you eat together as a family, say a blessing before your meal. Choose the blessing below that fits your family best — or use them all.

*Bless us, O Lord, and these, thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ our Lord. Amen.*  
(Catholic)

*For health, for strength, for daily bread, we give thee thanks, O Lord. Amen.*  
(Protestant)

*Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth food from the earth. (Adapted from Jewish Tradition)*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

At a family meal, tell your children what family meals were like when you were growing up — who was there, what your table was like, where you sat, what was expected of you, your favorite foods, etc. Invite them to say what they like about eating together as a family.

## **FAMILY PROJECT:**

Make placemats for the family. Use large sheets of construction paper or light-colored wrapping paper for the background. Ask each person to print the blessing before meals in one corner of the placemat and then decorate it with pictures of favorite foods.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 5

(Called to His Supper, pages 28-33)

Our lives would be rather dull without a celebration now and then. Celebrating means coming together with family and friends, talking and laughing (and sometimes crying), eating and drinking. And celebrating also involves remembering. Even a birthday party leads us to remember when someone was born and how old he or she is. Our session today was about celebrating and remembering.



Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover celebration, the greatest feast of the Hebrew people. It was a time of remembering the great events by which God saved his chosen people from slavery in Egypt. By retelling the story and by eating special foods, the Hebrew people entered into the process of remembering in an active and personal way. As a result, they became aware not only of God's goodness to them in the past but also of God's continuing presence in their own lives.

At the Last Supper, we know that Jesus took two of the traditional Passover foods, bread and wine, changed them into his own body and blood, and gave them to his Apostles. Then he told them to do what he had done in his memory.

Although many centuries have come and gone since that time, Jesus' followers still gather to remember him — his life, death, and resurrection — as he commanded. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we do more than recall a past event, however. Through the

power of the Holy Spirit, the past and present somehow come together, and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is made real in our own lives, in the bread that is his body and in the wine which is his blood.

The story of the Last Supper is one of the treasures of our Christian faith. It is the foundation of our celebration of the Eucharist. As you share this story with your child, help him or her look beyond the facts to see how much Jesus loved his Apostles. Help him or her understand that Jesus loves us just as much today, and his sacrifice of love is present when we celebrate the Eucharist.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

At your family meal, say the prayer below that is adapted from the Passover meal:

*Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, who has kept us alive, cared for us, and brought us together to share this meal.*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

Invite everyone in your family to tell about the best gift that they ever received and why they liked it so much. When everyone is finished, talk about why people give gifts and why the best kind of gift that we can give someone is the gift of ourselves. With your family, think of different ways that we give ourselves to others, such as listening to them, helping them with something, reading a story to them, rubbing their backs when they are tired, giving them a hug, being cheerful, or drawing a picture for them.

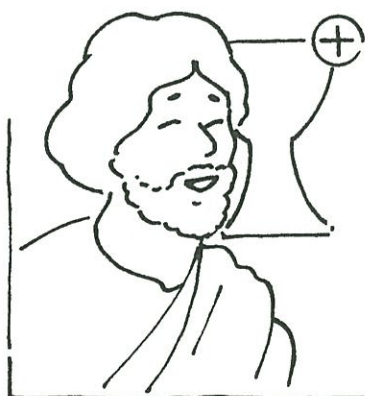
## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

Put the names of everyone in your family in a bowl and have each person draw a name. Give a gift of yourself to that person by doing something kind for him or her.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 6

(Called to His Supper, pages 34-39)

Our celebration of the Mass is a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. Today's session focused on the heart of this celebration — the Eucharistic prayer. During the Eucharistic prayer, as the priest repeats Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper in his memory, the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, and his sacrifice of love on the cross becomes present.



Christ's presence in the Eucharist is a wondrous mystery.

The Church teaches that Christ's presence in the Eucharist is a *sacramental* presence which means that Christ is really and truly present under the appearance or signs of bread and wine. In other words, what we see and taste and touch may seem to be bread and wine, but the underlying reality is Christ himself. The transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is called *transubstantiation*.

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a wondrous mystery which we will never be able to understand completely. We can, however, gain valuable insights into it. For example, our own experiences tell us that reality is often more than what meets the eye. Anyone who wears a wedding ring knows that the ring is more than just a band of gold. It carries with it the reality of the marriage — the love shared between two people. And so with other things — a crucifix, the flag, and even your

child's first shoes; they all carry a reality far beyond what can be seen.

Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is a reality something like this. The bread that is broken is not simply bread; it is really his body. The wine that is shared is more than wine; it is really his blood.

Perhaps, as you read this, you are wondering how you can talk with your child about the Eucharist. You need not worry about theological explanations, since they will be beyond what your child can grasp at this age. The best thing you can do is to say what you believe, share your child's sense of wonder at this mystery, and help him or her develop faith in the Eucharist by celebrating each Sunday with a community who believes in God's presence in the bread and wine and who offers it in praise and thanksgiving.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

In your family meal-time prayers this week, include one or more of the memorial acclamations that we use at Mass:

*When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.*

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION:**

Walk around your home and notice how many things there are that help you remember someone who is gone, for example, a book, a piece of jewelry, family pictures. As you discover them, tell some of the stories about the people you are remembering. Point out that these things help keep persons who are gone close to us.

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 7

(Called to His Supper, pages 40-44)

“Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” Soon your child will hear these words and know they are meant for him or her.

When we receive the Eucharist at Mass, we are sharing in a sacred meal. At this meal Jesus himself is our food. He nourishes us, strengthens us and transforms us by sharing his life and love with us. At the Last Supper Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). Jesus clearly meant the Eucharist to be food for a lifetime. We all know what happens when a branch is broken off from the vine.

In giving himself to us as bread and wine, Jesus unites us to himself and is as close to us as the food we eat. There is a mysterious communion between his own body and ours. Jesus also unites us with one another in the Eucharist. The act of receiving communion is both intensely personal *and* communal.

Today’s lesson introduced the children to elements of the Communion Rite: the Our Father, the sign of peace, the breaking of the bread, and the invitation to Communion. These gestures and prayers lead us step by step into a deeper understanding of the meaning of Eucharist. They speak of unity, forgiveness, peace, trust, sharing, love, and joy, all of which are at the heart of what Eucharist means.

As you talk and pray with your child in the days ahead, take time to share what receiving the Eucharist means to you and help your child anticipate the joy of being united with Jesus who is loving, kind, and gentle, who is always there for us, who understands and accepts us as we are, who is the very source of

our life as Catholic Christians.

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

Begin by inviting everyone to think of something that reminds them of peace. After they have had a little time to think, invite each person to say what his or her peace sign is (a hug, a heart, a beautiful sunset, a soaring bird, a quiet mountain lake). As you talk about your family’s peace signs, try to come to a better understanding of what peace is, the kinds of things that bring peace, and the kinds of things that destroy it. Talk about how Jesus wants everyone to live at peace and what each one can do to keep peace in the family, school, or workplace.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

With your family, decide on a color for peace and get a large candle in that color. Decorate it with a sign for Jesus, who gives us his peace, and with your family’s peace signs, which can be drawn or cut from colored paper or bits of felt. Put your candle on your family table and light it at meal-times. As you light the candle, say the prayer below.



## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

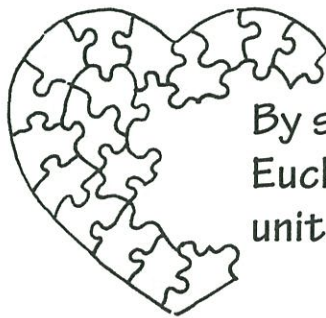
*Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe. Amen.*

# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 8

(Called to His Supper, pages 45-49)

*E Pluribus Unum* is a Latin phrase that means “one from many.” It appears on one side of every coin minted in the United States. “One from many” was one of the major themes in today’s lesson.

When we receive Holy Communion at Mass, we believe we are united with Jesus. However, our close relationship with Jesus is only part of the story. Because we are united with Jesus, we are united with everyone who shares the Eucharist. In other words, by sharing the Eucharist, we become “one from many.” This is the point that St. Paul makes, when he writes that because we share the one bread, we become one body.



By sharing the  
Eucharist, we are  
united in love.

A second major theme in today’s lesson concerned our dismissal from Mass. At the end of the Mass, we hear the priest say, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” Perhaps we have heard these words so often that they have become simply a nice way to conclude our celebration, but they are much more than that. These words tell us what is expected of us. They are a commission to share the love that we have received with others. If after Mass we simply pick up where we left off as if nothing had happened, then we have missed the whole point of the Eucharist.

As your child nears the end of his or her preparation for first Holy Communion, take

some time to talk with him or her about the responsibility we have to share the love that is given to us in the Eucharist. Help your child understand that every Eucharistic celebration sends us back into our homes, neighborhoods, and schools with a mission — to let others know how much Jesus loves them by what we say and do. It is through our love for others that the world will be transformed.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

*Help us be your hands, O Lord,  
At home, at work, at play.  
Help us be your hands, O Lord,  
Today and every day.*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

Talk with your family about how we know that God loves us. Lead them to see that God shows his love for us through the love of the people around us. Then talk about the people in the world who might think that nobody loves them. Follow your discussion by reading “The Selfish Giant” by Oscar Wilde. Help your family see that, like the Giant, we can fill our world with happiness when we think of others and share our love and what we have with them. (“The Selfish Giant” can be found in the children’s section of most public libraries and is also available on the internet.)

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

With your family, identify people who need some love in their lives and find a way to give it to them. Here are suggestions:

- Invite someone who lives alone to dinner or include him or her in a family outing.
- Visit someone in a nursing home.
- Call someone who lives alone.
- Make or send cards to the people in your parish who are sick.
- Take some balloons or stuffed animals to children in the hospital.

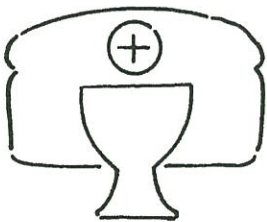


# PARENT NOTES FOR SESSION 9

(Called to His Supper, pages 49-55)

Today was the last session in your child's preparation for first Holy Communion. One of the focal points of this lesson was the second part of the story of the feeding of the multitude when Jesus told the people that he was the Bread of Life (John 6:22-59).

Bread is something that most of us eat on a daily basis in one form or another. It is one of the most common foods the world around. It tastes good, nourishes us, strengthens us, and helps us grow.



*The Eucharist nourishes us, strengthens us, and helps us grow in likeness to Christ.*

By identifying himself as the Bread of Life, Jesus was leading us to a deeper understanding of the Eucharist. He wanted us to know that the Eucharist is as important and as basic for our life's journey as ordinary bread is. He wanted us to know that the Eucharist satisfies our inner hungers and thirsts, that it nourishes us, strengthens us, and helps us grow, not physically, but in our likeness to Christ.

Before long, your child will be "called to his supper" for the first time. The day of your child's first Holy Communion will be a special day. It will mark the beginning of a new relationship with Jesus and will be the next step in his or her journey toward full initiation into the Catholic Church — a journey which began at Baptism.

As you prepare for this day with your child, help your child remember that the most important thing about the day is not the clothing, the party, or the presents, but loving Jesus and wanting to receive him in the

Eucharist. Pray together that God will bless your child with a great love for Jesus and a desire to receive him in the Eucharist.

In the days, months, and years ahead, your child will need your ongoing support and encouragement, especially as the newness of being able to join the community at the table of the Lord gradually wears off. Your faith and your example of participating regularly in the Eucharist will be particularly important in helping your child continue to grow in his or her understanding and appreciation of the gift of love that Jesus offers us in the Eucharist. It is food for our whole life!

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

Find a simple recipe for bread. Make it with your family and serve it at your main meal.

Or, look at the pictures and keepsakes of your own first Holy Communion with your family and tell them what you remember. Share how important the Eucharist has been to you and how you have grown in your understanding and appreciation of it.

## **FAMILY PRAYER:**

At your family meal, say the following prayer:

*Lord, you give us food from heaven.  
May we always hunger for the bread of life.  
Grant this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## **FAMILY DISCUSSION:**

Spend some time talking about bread at your family meal. Talk about your favorite kind of bread, how often you eat bread, the different kinds of bread that people eat, what bread is called in other languages, how bread becomes part of our bodies, how it strengthens and nourishes us, etc.