

GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS AND PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS

This document has been developed to help families prepare at home for the celebration of the sacrament of First Holy Communion. The role of the parish catechetical leader and/or catechists will be to accompany the parents in this process. Please read the document thoroughly prior to offering it to the parents.

The family is the first place the child learns about love which is received from the parents, family, friends, Jesus, God, and the Church. From infancy, the parent's care and unconditional love for their child reveals God's care and unconditional love for them. Love, relationships, and sharing of a meal are important components in the preparation for the sacrament of First Holy Communion. The family is the most appropriate environment to experience love and unity.

The attached document, therefore, proposes that parents be given the responsibility of preparing their child for his / her celebration of First Holy Communion. Families will need to be accompanied during this process. It is thus important that they be given some explanations along with the document to help them better understand their role. Parents are encouraged to do the formation and experience the process, PCL / catechists are to accompany the families.

This preparation should be done fairly close to the actual celebration of First Holy Communion. The whole thing should take approximately 6 to 7 hours.

You are invited to offer a short meetings of approximately 30 minutes with parents to share how they have experienced each section.

It is important to do it sequentially, i.e., approximately every 5 to 6 days interval, in order to allow time for assimilation, and time for the child to comprehend the vocabulary, the symbols, the items and scriptures that are read and shared. Also, the activities need to be done during each section, as they will help in the integration of the meaning of the Sacrament.

The **first part** is addressed directly to the parents and allows them to immerse themselves in the dynamics of the sacrament of First Communion. The parents should read it thoroughly, and then may do certain parts with their child. The story of Creation and the Gospel John 1, may be read and shared with the child.

Here is a video you may want to share with them on the story of creation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZ1Fd_SPC18&t=10s

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- How did your child react to hearing the story of creation? What did you/your child hear?
- The Gospel of John? What did you/your child hear?

Parents may wish to bring out the child's Baptism candle and picture of their Baptism to show that he/she was created in the image of God, is part of the family of God, and is loved by God unconditionally.

Invite parents to share a story about their child's baptism, what kind of day was it, who was present, how did you celebrate?

Introduce the word "communion". Share the meaning of "Trinity" through the "Sign of the Cross" done well and reverently.

Since it will be the first sharing, perhaps take 45 to 60 minutes to do this with the child.

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- Share moments of "communion" (with family, friends, school, community).
- Besides the "Sign of the Cross", which other prayers does the child know?

The **second part** offers parents an opportunity to lead their child in an understanding of the concept of becoming a member of the Body of Jesus Christ, and an important member of the Christian community. The sharing and the activity of the self-portrait will aid in this task. This part enables the child to understand they are an important part of the mystical Body of Christ. Lead the child to understand that he / she is created from love and we all need love, we need each other – our family, our friends, Jesus, and our Christian community.

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- Show the self-portrait and any other art work created? What was shared while doing it?

This section deepens the meaning of communion, and stresses the importance of sharing a meal. Read the story of Emmaus, Luke 24:13-35. The unleavened bread will be made to help understand the Eucharist – living Bread of Life. "The Eucharist is an encounter with Christ truly present in the supreme act of His love, the life-giving gift of Himself" (Pope Francis). Through the Unleavened Bread of the Eucharist, the merits of Christ's Redemptive Passion are bestowed on us, here and now. Jesus Christ is the true nourishment of our souls. Through Holy Communion, we remain in Him and He remains in us. *(This could be the first part of this section done in one hour).*

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- How was the experience of making the unleavened bread? (fun, difficult, understood etc)

The second part of this section introduces prayer and meditation - the breath prayer. We love Jesus, we wish to spend time with Him, and we do this through prayer and meditation. Child will learn to do the breathing prayer. With the Eucharist we grow and deepen our friendship with Jesus, and the making of the friendship bracelets helps in this. It also helps to illustrate that in communion we cannot separate ourselves from Jesus, like the threads of the bracelet once it is made. The child will learn that Jesus's love is eternal and unconditional – the activity of the Crucifix. *(This second section could be done in one hour).*

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- Does the child know the "Our Father"? Perhaps it can be recited as a family every evening at bedtime. This will allow the family to pray together and the child to learn it well.

- How was the experience with the meditation – the breath prayer? How was the child able to participate in it? Was it difficult or enjoyable and pleasant?
- Share on the friendship bracelet – did they understand that Jesus is always with us, like the threads that are woven together?

The **third part**, on the **Mass**, will help the child understand and appreciate the celebration of the Mass. *This part on the Mass may be split in two sessions of one hour each.* As you complete the first half of the Mass part, be sure to do the cutting and coloring of the pictures corresponding to the Mass part that was done. Following the completion of the first part of the Mass, do the second part of the Mass, along with the printables on the Mass. *(This second section of the Mass should take about an hour as well).* It would be ideal to also attend Mass.

The **last section, Family Celebration Ritual**, should be done all at one time. This section serves as a mini-retreat after having completed the formation thus far.

The objective is to help make the connection that the Mass is a meal, shared with the family of God, similar to a family meal. Place the Crucifix on the table, with candles, and the coloring activities of the Mass items. *(Approximately one hour).*

Sharing with parents and PCL after this session:

- Share on the comments made on the taste of bread.
- How did you as a parent feel after living this celebration with your family?
- How did the child feel after this celebration?
- What did you as a parent, and your child, like best of this celebration?

ACCOMPANYING

- Your role in supporting parents is very important.
- Parents should do the First Communion preparation with their child. The PCL / catechist will remain available to the parents during the process if there are difficulties or questions, otherwise meet at the end of each section for a brief sharing on the questions suggested after each section. Remain present and available throughout the process.
- Take the time to introduce each of the four parts while explaining the meaning of the process and the role they will play.
- Instruct parents to read the documents thoroughly.
- Encourage them to plan the whole process. Suggest that they make a schedule to plan when they will do each part.
- Parents are to ensure that they have all the printables, and materials they need well prepared before they start session so that they can be done at the appropriate time.
- Have a follow up after the activity has been completed, soliciting their comments.
- After the First Communion, ask the parents and the child to share how they experienced this Sacrament.