

Blessed Trinity Parish Faith Formation
November Family Faith Activity - The Sacrament of the Eucharist

"And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many."

~ Mark 14:23–26



Background for parents

Understanding our Catholic faith can help us draw closer to God and practice our faith more fully. Our Family Faith Activities are designed to help you as parents to help your children better understand and have an experience to learn and live our Catholic faith.

A sacrament is an effective sign given to us by Jesus through which we share in God's life. We call the life of God within us, **grace**. Christ instituted the sacraments so that his followers (us!) could always experience His presence. Sacraments join Catholics all over the world with Jesus and with one another. Sacraments unite us as the Body of Christ, the Church.

"As parents, most of what we do for our children can be summed up by the phrase: being present. We are present to our children throughout their lives for ordinary daily moments and for extraordinary moments. Children often make a lot of noise about wanting many things, but ultimately, what they want is their parents' undivided attention and approval - in other words, their presence." (Joe Paprocki in "Living the Mass" p. 105)

"When it comes to the notion of presence, God is the ultimate parent. Parents striving to be present to their children can look to God for the perfect example. God sent his Son, Jesus, so that we might see God's presence in the flesh. In turn, Jesus gave us the Eucharist, that he might be present to us always, even 'to the end of the age.'" ("Living the Mass" p. 105)

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in which Jesus is truly present under the appearances of bread (hosts) and wine. It is the **2nd Sacrament of Initiation** into full participation in the Catholic Church (remember, the Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation). The Eucharist takes place within the part of the Mass called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Receiving the Eucharist is called **Holy Communion**. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the **Last Supper**.

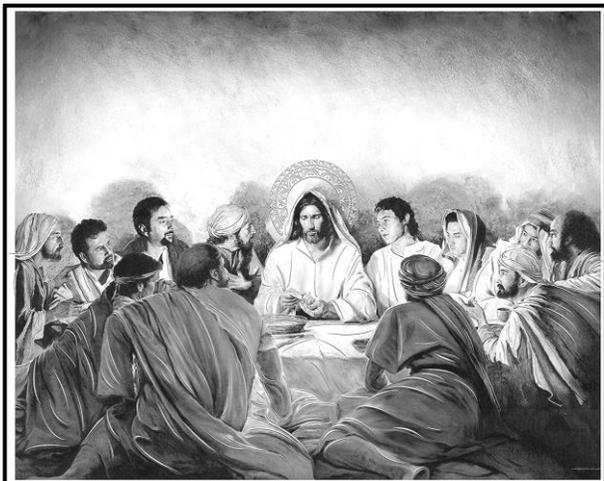
Read together as a family

Sometimes when we are really hungry, we grab something quick and eat by ourselves. But eating with family or friends makes it a special time. We remember that we belong and are important to each other. **At Mass, we come to God's table, the altar, to share a holy meal - the Eucharist.** It is there that we remember that we belong to the Body of Christ - the Church and we give thanks and praise to God.

Jesus liked to eat with his friends and Apostles. They were like his family. He ate many ordinary meals with them, but each year, they had a special meal together. It was called **Passover**. During Passover, the Jewish people celebrate their escape from slavery in Egypt. Celebrating Passover helps them remember God's goodness.

Talk together -- Take turns talking about how your family gets ready for a special family dinner at home. Do you use special dishes? Do you set the table and decorate it? What does your family do to make it special? How did that special meal help you grow closer as a family?

The night before he died, Jesus celebrated a Passover meal with his Apostles. It was his **Last Supper** with them. At the Last Supper, Jesus thought about his Apostles and about everyone who would ever live. He knew that soon he would give his life to save all people from sin.



At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his Apostles saying, "Take and eat. This is my body." Later he took a cup of wine, blessed it and gave it to his Apostles saying, "Take and drink, this is my Blood." Then he said, "**DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**"

This was the first **Eucharist!** By giving his Apostles - and ALL people - the Eucharist, Jesus let them **and us** know that he would be with us always. And receiving Jesus in Holy Communion at Mass, strengthens us with His own life and love. God's own life and love in us is called **grace**.

Talk together -- Talk with each other about memories you have of a special family gathering. What do you remember? What made it special? Who was there? What memories do you have of them?



At Mass, we remember Jesus and him giving us the Eucharist at the Last Supper. During the part of the Mass called the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**, the priest does what Jesus did at the Last Supper. He says the words of Jesus and calls the Holy Spirit to bless the bread (hosts) and wine.

During the Eucharistic prayer at Mass, the priest says the words of Jesus, "Take this all of you and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you." and holds up

the now **consecrated** (sacred) host. He continues the prayer and says, "Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood. The Blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. *Do this in memory of me.*" The priest then elevates the chalice of the now **consecrated** wine high above the altar.

The ordinary bread (hosts) and wine are now changed and Jesus is with us in a wonderful new way. The bread and wine become Jesus' body and blood for us. This is called **Transubstantiation** (pronounced: *trans - sub - stan - she - A - shun*). The Eucharist looks and tastes like bread and wine, but we believe that it is really and truly Jesus. Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is wonderful, but mysterious. No one understands it completely, but we believe. We have **faith**. We believe that what Jesus said at the Last Supper is true.



Talk together -- Talk about these examples to better understand the mystery of Transubstantiation:

- You can't see an electric current when it travels through the wire, but you can see the light it makes.
- You cannot see the human soul, but you can see the soul in action through words and actions.
- Talk about friendship. Most young children value friendships highly, so they will understand when you explain that Christ is present in the Eucharist in order to stay close to his friends.
- Give examples of sacrifice. For instance, your child sacrifices a toy she loves in order to make a friend happy while playing. Explain that, on the cross at Calvary, Jesus sacrificed his life out of love for us. Through the Eucharist, we unite ourselves with his gift and receive grace.

Celebrating the Eucharist at Mass is our best way of remembering Jesus and what he means to us. The word Communion tells us that when we receive the Eucharist, we are united with Jesus! Receiving Holy Communion, being united to Jesus, means being as close to him as we can be - sharing his life and his love. Receiving his Grace which nourishes our soul to go out and live our faith in our lives everyday! (*Adapted from: "Called to His Supper" by Jeannine Leichner*)

More for parents

Taking your children to Mass each week is an important example to set for them to know you want to lead them closer to God. To guide children at Mass:

- Sit in the front pew at church so your child can see what is happening at Mass.
- Whisper explanations about the priest's actions in his/her ear.
- If your child is too young to receive the Eucharist, he/she can approach the priest with their arms crossed over their chest for a blessing. The crossed arms are a sign to the priest that your child is too young to be receive Communion.

Want to go deeper?

† If you would like to learn more about the Mass and why we do what we do and say what we say, go to our Blessed Trinity parish website:

www.blessedtrinitypgh.org/student-faith-formation

- scroll down the page
- click on the yellow box to watch the 30 minute video "The Catholic Mass Explained for Children"

It is a video made by our Faith Formation Co-Directors and is filmed in our own St. Basil Church. Our Fr. Ken is the celebrant. Parts of the Mass are explained throughout.

† Read the four accounts of the Last Supper found in the New Testament in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-39 and I Corinthians 11:23-25. Use a children's picture Bible with illustrations to help younger children understand.

Bring it home -- God calls us to celebrate Mass each week and receive him in the Eucharist to nourish our body and soul. At Mass, we come to His table to share a meal with our parish family. Bring that idea into your home this month with our November Family Faith Activity.

Turn over for the November Family Faith Activity →

Blessed Trinity Faith Formation
November Family Faith Activity -- Family meal and blessing

Talk together and choose a night to have a special family meal at home. Make sure the day/time you choose is one when you can all sit together for a meal and not have to rush off anywhere. It can be a simple meal or something more elaborate. What matters is your family is together and can make it special by everyone helping to get the meal ready, set the table with special dishes or glasses, etc. Fold the napkins in a special way. Maybe put K-Love radio station on low (Christian music). Maybe make or buy a special dessert, too! *Add your own special touches.*

You should definitely have some type of bread to break and share during dinner. Maybe you would like to use a small unsliced loaf of bread, a hoagie roll, or other large roll of some kind. Maybe you might even want to bake your own bread...? Whatever your family likes.

And -- NO PHONES -- at the table. Everyone should silence their phone and put it away. Give each other your attention without distractions.

When you all are sitting at the table ready to eat: Pray before your meal

All make the Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Reader 1: Jesus, you invite us to your table to receive the Eucharist at Mass to grow closer to you. Help us today to draw closer to you and each other as we share this family meal.

ALL together: Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts which we are about to receive. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Break bread and talk together during dinner

- Someone at the table takes the bread and breaks off a piece for him/herself and passes it to the next person.
- **As you are breaking bread, parents:** remind your family that you are gathering for a meal (a supper) like Jesus did with his disciples.
- As you eat, talk about what you mean to each other. Some discussion starters: What happened lately that made you feel loved in your family? How can your family show God's love to each other more? to others?
- Take time to listen to each other and enjoy this family time.
- Everyone should stay at the table until all are finished eating. Then pray together.

Give thanks and pray after your meal

Reader: Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of yourself to us in the Eucharist. Thank you for giving us this meal and the love of our family. Help us to remember your love for us and help us to show your love to others.

All make the Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Send it in -- Take a picture of your family during your special family meal time and print it out and send it with your child to Faith Formation or Email the photo to us and we will print it..

OR You can write a response about your family's experience of breaking bread and your special family meal and send that in or Email it to us and we will print it.

ceisenbarth@blessedtrinitypgh.net OR egarfold@blessedtrinitypgh.net

Please send your response by November 19.

Maybe an occasional special family meal night including the prayers and breaking bread could become a tradition in your family!