

**PREPARING
FOR THE SACRAMENT
OF THE
HOLY EUCHARIST**



*Our lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony Parish
Hamilton, New Jersey*

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We hope this handbook will serve you well in preparing your child for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist—the great gift of Christ Himself in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Your child learns best by witnessing your own faith in the Real Presence of the Lord. Our parish is pleased to assist you in bringing your child to this sacramental encounter. In this booklet are activities and information that will be helpful in this process. Please take time to review the material and to mark your calendars for the events that have been planned for you! Our priests, catechists and staff are always willing to help you. Do not hesitate to call on us with any questions or concerns.

God bless you!

Mariyam Francis

Director of Religious Education

Msgr. Thomas Gervasio

Pastor

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
about the
THE HOLY EUCHARIST
“a Little Catechism”

What is the Holy Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament, a sacrifice, and the abiding presence of Jesus Himself, God and man. In the Eucharist, Jesus is truly and completely present under the appearance of bread and wine. He is present in his body, blood, soul and divinity. The word Eucharist is of Greek origin, meaning “thanksgiving.”

When and why did Jesus give us the Holy Eucharist?

Jesus instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, “the night on which He was betrayed,” as He celebrated the Last Supper with His apostles. At the Passover meal, Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to his apostles saying, “This is my Body which will be given up for you.” Then he took the chalice of wine and said, “Take this and drink of this, all of you. This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.”

Jesus gave us the Eucharist because He want to stay close to us until the end of time, to teach us, comfort us, strengthen us and make us holy.

How is the celebration of the Eucharist carried out?

The Eucharist unfolds in two great parts which together form one, single act of worship which is called the Mass or the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Liturgy of the Word involves proclaiming and listening to the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Eucharist includes the presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer which contain the words of consecration and communion.

What do we mean by “liturgy?”

Liturgy is a Greek word meaning “service.”

What is the consecration of the Mass?

The consecration takes place during the Eucharistic Prayer offered by the priest. During this prayer, the priest calls down the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine. He takes the bread and wine and says the words that Jesus said at the Last Supper (This is my Body...This is my Blood...)

What is transubstantiation?

This is the term we use to describe the change that takes place at the consecration of the Mass. The substance of the bread and wine change into to the Body and Blood of Christ, while their “accidents” remain the same. (i.e. the bread still looks, feels, and tastes like bread, the wine still looks, and tastes like wine) The Real Presence of the Lord is “veiled” under these accidents.

Why Jesus is called the “Lamb of God?”

Jesus has this title because He was slain like the Old Testament Passover Lamb and He saved us from the slavery of sin.

Who may make Jesus present in the Eucharist?

Priests are ordained by the bishop and through the celebration of Mass make Jesus present for us. He gives the Eucharist in Holy Communion to the faithful. He may be assisted by a deacon and/or extraordinary minister of the Holy Communion.

How long does the Presence of Jesus remain in the Eucharist?

The Presence of Jesus remains as long as the sacred host and precious blood exist.

What must we do to receive the Eucharist worthily?

A baptized Catholic may receive the Eucharist worthily when

- ❖ They truly believe that Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist
- ❖ They are free from serious sin
- ❖ They fast before receiving

What is the “Eucharistic Fast?”

The Church requires a fast of one hour from all food and liquids (with the exception of water and medicine). This fast period is reduced or dispensed for the sick.

How often may one receive the Eucharist?

Provided that one is in the “state of grace” i.e. free of any serious sin, one may receive the Eucharist often, even daily.

How should one receive the Eucharist?

A person should receive the Lord with reverence and love. In the US, one is given the option of receiving “on the tongue” or “in the hand.” After making a

bow on approaching the minister of the hosts or of the chalice, one responds “Amen” upon hearing “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.” After consuming the host, one returns to their place in church and should spend some time in prayer.

What are the “fruits” or effects of Holy Communion?

Holy Communion:

- ❖ Increases our union with Christ and the Church
- ❖ Strengthens and renews the life of grace received at Baptism and Confirmation
- ❖ Makes us grow in love of our neighbor
- ❖ Strengthens us in charity
- ❖ Wipes away venial sin and preserves us from mortal sin in the future

Does Jesus in the Church after Mass?

The Presence of Jesus remains in the Eucharist even after Mass. The remainder of sacred hosts is placed in the tabernacle.

What is the tabernacle?

It is the “box-like” shrine in which Jesus is kept. This is done so that people may pray in the presence of the Lord and that hosts are available to bring to the sick and homebound.

What is the respect due to the Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle?

Respect is shown by our prayerfulness and love. We should keep silence to allow others to pray. Whenever we pass before the tabernacle or enter or exit our pew, we should genuflect (or bow).

What is a sanctuary lamp?

A light (candle or oil lamp) is kept burning near the tabernacle to indicate the Presence of the Lord.

What is a genuflection?

A genuflection is an act of reverence to the Eucharist by bending the right knee to the floor.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents, as primary educators of their children are responsible for preparing them for the Sacraments of Initiation. They should strive to be models of moral living and forgiveness. With the support of our parish religious education program, parents should prepare their child for this sacrament in the following ways:

- ❖ Modeling Catholic life by assisting at Mass every Sunday and Day of Obligation
- ❖ Maintaining a regular prayer life at home
- ❖ Making a sacramental confession regularly and encouraging their child to do so
- ❖ Observe the Eucharistic Fast
- ❖ Reviewing the basic prayers and the responses and gestures of the Mass. Practice genuflecting in church upon entering the church and before leaving.
- ❖ Attending the meetings and events sponsored by the parish
- ❖ Review the catechetical texts and the *Together as a Family* section at the end of each chapter
- ❖ Reading and discussing the Bible Stories relating to the Eucharist noted in this booklet
- ❖ Being positive about the obligation to assist at Mass
- ❖ Assessing their child's understanding of the Eucharistic Presence and the obligations for a worthy reception of Holy Communion. A First Communicant should know the difference between the Body of Christ and ordinary bread. The bread and wine carried to the altar at Mass is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ at the consecration.
- ❖ Explaining that whether one receives the host only or the Precious Blood only—one is receiving Jesus Himself, whole and entire. Be careful to explain that receiving under one form (host or precious blood) is not receiving only a "part" of Jesus.

GREAT HELP FOR PARENTS!
<http://www.bemydisciples.com>

CUSTOMS EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW

The Sign of the Cross with Blessed Water

At the doors of every Catholic Church there are receptacles with Blessed Water. Upon entering, we dip two fingers in the water bless ourselves making the sign of the cross. This reminds us of our baptismal dignity and commitment. We were also signed with the cross at baptism. The cross is a symbol of Christ's love, of our faith and our salvation. We begin and end prayers with the sign of the cross.

Genuflection

The Latin word "genuflexo" means "on bended knee." Bending the right knee to the floor for a moment and standing up is a gesture of respect reserved to the Blessed Sacrament. As a Catholic enters the pew or row of seats, he or she genuflects facing the tabernacle. This is recognition of Christ's Presence. The practice grew out of the ancient court ceremonial where a subject would approach the King or Queen on bended knee. If one's physical condition impedes this gesture, a profound bow is substituted. One genuflects whenever passing the tabernacle, except at the altar to receive Communion

Bowing

This is a gesture of reverence. We bow before the altar (when the Blessed Sacrament is not present) we bow before an image of the crucified Lord. We also bow during the Creed at the words referring to the Incarnation.

Striking the Breast

During the prayer, "I confess" (Confiteor) at the beginning of Mass, Catholics strike their breast with the right hand as they say "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." This gesture emphasizes sorrow.

Standing & Kneeling

Standing denotes respectful attention and prayer. We stand during the Introductory Rites, the Gospel with its acclamation, the Creed, Prayer of the Faithful and from the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer until the "Holy, Holy, Holy." We also stand from the Lord's Prayer until the "Lamb of God" as well as the Concluding Rites.

Kneeling denotes prayerful adoration. We kneel following the "Holy, Holy Holy" until the "Amen" concluding the Eucharistic Prayer. We kneel once more during preparation for Holy Communion and upon returning to one's place after receiving the Holy Eucharist

The Sign of Peace

Usually a handshake, this gesture is made shortly before receiving Communion. It reminds us of the need for reconciliation before approaching the altar for the Eucharist.



BIBLE STORIES AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The Baptism of Jesus: Matthew 3: 13-17

Scripture Background

John the Baptist was the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. He is last great prophet before the coming of the Messiah. He is sometimes called “the bridge between the Old and New Testaments. John was a zealous preacher who called conversion of life and baptism. He preached at the River Jordan where large number of disciples came to him. Jesus approached John and was baptized. Jesus, being God, had no need of a baptism of repentance. The baptism marked the inauguration of his public ministry and was a sign of his humility, “solidarity” if you will with our weak humanity. At his baptism, the Holy Spirit is seen in visible form of a dove and the voice of the Eternal Father is heard calling all to obedience to Christ.

Other Bible References: Mark 1: 9-11; Luke 3: 21-22; John 1: 29-34; 1 Cor 12: 12-13

We Belong to God: Family Activities

- Share stories and mementos of the baptism of each family member
- Take holy water from the church (in our churches it is by the elevator at the church level) Use it before each meal inviting all to bless themselves as a remembrance of their baptism.
- Talk about what each person likes best about belonging to our parish
- Visit the baptismal font at our churches.
- Try to remember the date, place, minister and godparents of your baptism.

The First Christians: Acts 2:41-47

Scripture Background

St. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. It relates the life of the early Church. The first Christians lived in community, sharing all things in common. No one was ever in need. They met in homes and prayed together. Many people were baptized and became followers of Jesus. They helped one another live as Jesus taught them.

Other Bible References: Acts 4: 32-37

We Gather: Family Activities

Choose one of the activities below to do together as a family.

- Talk about how your family and parish are like the first Christians. (Our parish bulletin may provide a few clues.)
- Search the newspaper for stories about people who live the faith.
- Make a list of ways to show that you live as a follower of Jesus today.

Samuel Listens to God: Samuel 3:1-10

Scripture Background

There are fifteen judges of Israel named in the Bible. The judges were the leaders of God's people before they had kings. They were filled with God's spirit. Samuel was a judge. Samuel's mother Hannah prayed to God for a child. God answered Hannah's prayer. When Samuel was little, his mother brought him to the shrine at Shiloh. The priest, Eli, taught Samuel as he grew up. In this story, Samuel hears the voice of God calling him. The name Samuel means "one who hears God."

Samuel heard a voice calling him. He thought it was Eli and called to him: "Here I am." Eli said "I did not call you. Go back to sleep. Two more times Samuel heard someone call his name. Each time he ran to Eli, saying, "Here I am."

Eli knew it was God calling Samuel. So Eli said to Samuel, "the Lord is calling you. If the Lord calls you again, listen to him." Samuel went back to sleep. Again God called out, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, Lord, I am

listening."

Other Bible references: Luke 1: 26-38

We Listen; Family Activities

These activities will help your child know and reverence the Bible as God's word.

- Place a Bible on the dining room table. This week, begin your meals by reading someone's favorite Bible story.
- Prepare for Mass as a family. During the week read the gospel for the upcoming weekend. Then discuss the meaning of the story. This will help your children understand and pay attention much better. Visit <http://www.bemydisciples.com> for reflections on the Gospel.

Jesus Feeds the People: Luke 9:10-17

Scripture Background

In this event, Jesus shows people how much God loves everyone. The bread that Jesus shared would have been unleavened bread, a flat bread, much like pita bread. It was made from barley, a common crop because it could grow in poor soil.

For Jesus' listeners, this miracle called to mind the time many centuries earlier when God gave manna to the Israelites in the desert. For the people, Jesus' miracles were a sign that he was the Messiah, the promised one of God. Notice that Jesus' actions are similar to his actions at the Last Supper. The actions of blessing, *breaking and eating* are the same.

Other Bible references: Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6: 30-44; John 6: 1-15;

We Give Thanks - Family Activities

Teach your child about the importance of giving thanks to God for his gifts.

- Make and bake bread together
- Invite someone special to share a meal with your family
- This week, pray a prayer of thanksgiving together after meals.

The Last Supper: Luke 22:17-20

Scripture Background

The annual Jewish Feast of Passover celebrates God freeing the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. On Passover, the Jewish people eat a special meal. This was the meal Jesus ate with his disciples in Jerusalem the night before he died. The meal began with roasted lamb, unleavened bread, wine, and bitter herbs. The unleavened bread symbolized that the Israelites left Egypt in a hurry. There was no time to let the bread rise.

Here St. Luke tells us that Jesus gave us the Eucharist at Passover. The Eucharist is the gift of Jesus Himself-- his body and blood. Jesus tells the apostles: "Do this in memory of me." The Church is still follows Jesus' command when priests offer the Mass.

Other Bible References: Ex 12 & 13: 1-12 Mt 26: 20-30; Mk 14: 27-26; Jn 13: 21-30

We Remember - Family Activities

Tell your children about the Last Supper and the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass. At Mass we remember and celebrate what Jesus did for us.

- At dinner talk about the good things that happened that day.
- Listen carefully to the priest at Mass. What does the priest say and do that Jesus said and did at the Last Supper?
- Pay close attention to the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass. Listen especially to the words that the people say and learn them.
- Find out more about what takes place at a Passover meal.

The Road to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-3

Scripture Background

This story of the appearance of the risen Christ reveals the disbelief of the disappointed followers of Jesus--even when they hear. It is not clear who kept their eyes from recognizing him.

The most important piece of this event is that the disciples finally recognize Jesus when he breaks the bread. In the Bible, stories about breaking and

eating bread remind us that God always takes care of his people by feeding and strengthening them

Other Bible References: Matthew 28: 16-18; Luke 24: 36-49; John 20: 11-29 & Chap.21

We Celebrate: Family Activities

- Bake bread or cookies and share them with an elderly person who might enjoy your company.
- Make a donation to a local food bank. Consider helping the Mt. Carmel Guild of Trenton
- Pray together the “Mealtime Prayer” in <http://www.bemydisciples.com>

The Gift of the Holy Spirit: Acts 1:12, 2:1-42

Scripture Background

Every year Jews from many countries gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was a harvest festival. It occurred seven weeks, or fifty days, after the harvest of the first crops of wheat. On Pentecost, people offered a portion of their first harvest and two lambs to God as a sign of thanksgiving.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. The Holy Spirit helped the disciples preach the good news to all the people gathered in Jerusalem. The coming of the Holy Spirit established and formed the early Church.

Other Bible References: 1 Corinthians 12

We Live: Family Activities

- Pray together the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth. Amen.
- Discuss how the Holy Spirit helps your family to live as disciples of Jesus.



OUR PARISH CELEBRATION OF FIRST COMMUNION
“helpful details”

Refer to your Calendar of Events

Please be aware your child’s assigned group. Refer to the calendar of events and note the time and place of the required practices and First Communion Mass.

Practices

The presence of at least one parent or older sibling is required at the practices.

Attire

Boys: Suit & tie or sport jacket & tie; the tie and shirt are traditionally white. Dress shoes: i.e. no athletic shoes

Girls: White dress (Length at discretion of parents) A white veil is traditional (A floral piece for hair may be substituted) Gloves and/or purses may not be used at the Mass.

Seating

In order to draw the first communicants to the altar and to facilitate a dialog during the homily, they will be seated as group in the front pews. Each family will be assigned a reserved pew behind the first communion class. Additional guests will utilize the ample seating available behind the family reserved section.

Arrival

All children are to arrive no less than 1/2/ hour prior to Mass time. They should go directly to the church hall and take their assigned place. Parents should locate their family pew and when directed return to their child in the hall. They will be part of the procession into church.

**The Practice of Holy Communion Under Both Forms
(Sacred Host & Precious Blood)**

Since the practice of offering Holy Communion under both forms (species) is widely used in the Diocese of Trenton every

week, it is offered at the First Communion Mass. We stress that consuming the Precious Blood from the chalice is optional. (The Lord is received in His fullness and under a single species but both forms offer a fuller sign of the sacrament. Please make the decision to receive under one or both forms with your child.

Conclusion of Celebration

The children only will be part of the recessional. They will either proceed outside to the front steps or go to the sanctuary for a group photograph. All others should remain in their places while the photo is taken. The children will return to their pew.

Certificate

The certificate given to the communicants reflects the sacramental record and serves as a memento of the day. Please check to ensure its accuracy.

Photography/Videographer

Photo and Videography is not permitted during the Mass. This is to conserve the dignity and reverence of the Mass. A photographer has been retained and will make photographs and DVDs available for purchase.

Parish Liturgical Ministers Welcome to Assist

Family members may contact the Religious Education Office no later than the first week of April (609-587-4372) if they would be interested in assisting in any of the following ways: as altar servers (older siblings with serving experience) or commissioned Lectors or Eucharistic Ministers. Family members who are priests are welcome.