

IMPORTANT DATES FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

I don't know! We are brainstorming ways for the children to receive this sacrament. While they will have the materials taught in their classes, I want to hold off on the retreat until shortly before the sacrament.

First Reconciliation Retreat

Will be virtual with a packet given beforehand

Completed reconciliation books to be returned for review no later than:

Monday, December 7, 2020.

I will hand them out approximately a month earlier.

**Celebration of First Reconciliation will be in JANUARY
ALL students, those attending *St. Mary Magdalen School,
Ursuline Academy, and the Religious Instruction Classes***

This is a PERSONAL sacrament. Please take any photos from a distance!

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Mark your calendars for a series of two (2)

First Communion Parent Meetings on

Wednesday, January 20, 2021 and February 10, 2021

A morning and evening meeting choice will be offered for both dates, and if necessary they will be done through Google Meet

ACT OF CONTRITION

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart!

**In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against You, whom I should love
Above all things!**

**I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance,
To sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.**

**Our Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy!**

STANDING STILL

Children Will Listen

There are horrible images on the television these days: shootings, riots, and even videos of evil people doing horrible, violent things to other people. Parents plead for the release of their children and, instead, those same children are forced into the desert and executed.

People are not born wanting to do that.

I cannot imagine anyone, as an infant or toddler, desiring on his or her own to hurt another, to cause pain, or to intentionally inflict harm. Even a pre-teen or a teenager doesn't wake up one day and suddenly – without cause or influence – decide to be evil.

No, people are not born wanting to do that.

We, the grown ups, teach the children. We teach patience or intolerance, kindness or how to be a bully. We teach compassion or indifference, integrity or deceit. We teach decency or impropriety, acceptance or disapproval.

What will we teach this week?

Will we, as the song asks, "Cry the Gospel with our lives"?

Will we, as the saint challenges, conduct ourselves "in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ"?

Or will we teach them that "I" comes before "you" and that life itself is disposable?

As I think about the week ahead, I remember a conversation I had with my dad. He asked how the children were and I joked that they never listen.

"They don't listen," he chided. "They watch."

What they see this week is up to me. I pray they see how to be good, to be kind, to be righteous, to be holy. I hope they see how to pray and give thanks.

But in the end, it's up to me.

Because children are not born knowing how to do that, either.

(Written by Patrick Donovan, CYM Office, in his weekly newsletter 9/22/14)

[Cindy Coleman](#)

Five ways for parents to prepare children for First Holy Communion

Someone recently asked me, as a catechist, what do I think parents should keep in mind as they guide their children toward first holy Communion? Well, here's my response—five things I'd advise any parent to do to help their child prepare to receive the Eucharist for the first time.

1. Go to Sunday Mass.

Every week I tell the children it is important to go to Sunday Mass, and to please ask their parents to take them. I teach the children how beautiful, important and special it is to receive Jesus' body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. If receiving Jesus in holy Communion is wonderful and special, then we would want to at least receive the Eucharist every Sunday. I implore families, don't let "being too busy," sports or anything keep you from going to Mass. I compare trying to live a Catholic life without Mass like trying to grow a plant without water. It will wither and die.

2. Talk about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist with your child.

The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is our belief that the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Jesus. The Eucharist is not a symbol or a sign, but Jesus truly present.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds Catholics Jesus' "presence is not momentary nor simply signified, but wholly and permanently real under each of the consecrated species of bread and wine." The Council of Trent affirmed that "the true body and blood of our Lord, together with his soul and divinity, exist under the species of bread and wine. His body exists under the species of bread and his blood under the species of wine, according to the import of his words."

Near the start of our year of religious education, I tell my classes they are about to learn the most important thing all year: It is that the Eucharist is "really, really, really Jesus." I come back to this over and over through the year.

I can't remember how I reacted to the idea that through the prayers of the priest and the power of the Holy Spirit that God could become what appears to be bread and wine. When I stop to think about it, it really is amazing.

Talk with your child and make sure they understand the real presence. Try not to say "getting bread and wine." Instead talk about "receiving the precious body and precious blood."

A survey by Pew Research Forum and the Center for Applied Research in Apostolate, known as CARA, of self-identified adult Catholics showed that 45 to 50 percent of Catholics did not know the Catholic Church teaches belief in the real presence. If Catholics truly believed they were receiving Jesus Christ — body, blood, soul and divinity — wouldn't they all be at Mass every Sunday and receiving the Eucharist reverently?

3. Model reverence and focus on the sacrament when celebrating first Holy Communion.

First holy communion is an exciting time. There are special outfits, relatives and friends gathering and making a fuss, parties being planned, presents and the pageantry of the day. But please be careful for your child to be too caught up in the clothes, the party and the presents. It would be normal and natural for any child to focus on these happy things. Remind your child why all these wonderful and fun things are happening because they will be receiving Jesus in holy Communion for the first time.

4. Receive Communion with reverence and practice receiving Holy Communion at home with your child.

The more they practice, the more comfortable they will be, and less nervous on the day of first Communion. Also, kids think it is fun to practice!

Here is an easy-to-follow guide to use at home:

- You can use any sort of small cracker (I use oyster crackers) to help them become comfortable with the sequence of how to receive.
- Process with hands folded in prayer, singing the Communion hymn.
- When it is his or her turn, he or she should make a slight bow of the head — this is our sign of reverence. No need to bow from the waist. I tell them if their hair is flipping, it's too big a bow.
- Everyone has the personal choice to receive on the tongue or in the hand. When teaching about how to receive in the hand, children should make a throne with their hands as if they are receiving a king. The hands should be one underneath the other, usually the dominant hand on the bottom.
- When the priest says "The body of Christ," look at the host and respond "Amen" firmly like you believe it!
- Use the underneath hand to pick up the host and consume it immediately.
- Fold hands in prayer and process back to your seat to make a prayer of thanksgiving.
- If receiving on the tongue, gently extend your tongue after saying "Amen."
- There is no need to make the sign of the cross after receiving. The bow before receiving is the sign of reverence. I tell the children if they watch carefully every week during the Communion procession, they will see some adults who are good examples and some not very good examples, so *the children* need to be the extra good examples for the grown-ups.

5. Praise and thank God for the great gift of Communion.

St. Pius X called holy Communion "the shortest and surest way to heaven." So not only on the day of first holy Communion, but after every Communion, we all should praise and thank God the great gift of our Lord received in the Eucharist.

Prayer after Communion

Lord Jesus, I love and adore you. You're a special friend to me. Welcome, Lord Jesus, O welcome. Thank you for coming to me.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, O thank you for giving yourself to me. Make me strong to show your love wherever I may be. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay, close by me forever and love me, I pray.

Bless all of us children in your loving care and bring us to heaven to live with you there.

SACRAMENTS FOR REAL LIFE

At their infant son Michael's Baptism, Tom and Sally stood at the altar with their son's godparents and their 3-year-old daughter, Katie. As part of the baptismal rite, the priest invited all of them, including Katie, to mark Michael's forehead with the sign of the cross.

"For me, that moment was a brush with the divine," Sally remembers. "Katie's loving touch, her simple symbolic gesture, so clearly united the two of them in the world with God in heaven. The idea of her loving him, and the two of them showing God's care and tenderness to each other through the many phases of life they would share, was so palpable and so clearly an act of God. It was as forceful as lightning for me. That day will always be an example of what a sacrament can and should be. It's one of the greatest moments of my life."

Children's sacraments offer a second chance to learn, listen, and be open to the movement of God. Some parents say they weren't ready to hear about sacramental grace when they were preparing for the sacrament themselves, but now, with more life experience, they see value where before they saw tedium

"In the 30 years between my own first reconciliation and my son's first reconciliation, I didn't go to reconciliation at all," says Jeff, father of two. "I felt like, why should I confess my sins to a priest? I can say I'm sorry to God directly. But as I've seen how sin breaks relationships and tears apart families, I understand that there is something

powerful about naming my sin out loud. Reconciliation changes me in a way that private prayer cannot. I didn't understand that when I was younger."

A child's wonder at receiving a sacrament can jump start an adult's faith. "In the weeks leading up to my daughter's first communion, she was so focused on it," says Bethanny, mother of two. "At first I thought that maybe it was about the dress, but it was really about her true belief that Christ was coming to her in a way she had not experienced before. She saw it as a tremendous privilege. I hadn't been thinking very much about going to communion before that, and she moved me from taking it for granted to appreciating it."

- From *At Home with Our Faith*, Annemarie Scobey

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

How did you learn to cook, drive a car, or create a garden? Certainly good teachers, instructional books, and lots of practice were in the mix. But most of us would also admit that much of our learning has been secured and enhanced by the examples set by others.

During this season of saints, you can take advantage of them! First, use the examples set by the saints to introduce or reinforce the meaning of personal holiness. Then lead children to discover and value the powerful example their own holiness can offer to others.

Skill Development: Whose example helped you?

- Tying your shoe
- Catching a ball
- Learning to read
- Developing good manners

Jesus particularly valued the example of children! We are told in the book of Matthew that unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven! Discuss with your children how their example might positively affect friends, neighbors, family – even strangers!

FOUR REASONS TO GO TO MASS

Sometimes people ask, "What's the use of going to church?" You might have doubts of your own, but when you have kids who must be dressed and combed and bribed and shushed the debate intensifies. A few possible answers:

#1 YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GETTING THROUGH. My daughter, Mary Kate, who is just 5, has begun singing church songs with great gusto, not only in church but around the house. One of her favorites is the responsorial psalm, "Shepherd me, O God, beyond my scares, beyond my hopes, from death into life." Last week the two of us were driving around town with her cousin, Liam, 4 years old, who had become a big brother only the day before. They had been taking turns: One used the child car seat, while the other rode in the big kid seat and used the seat belt. At the last stop each of them refused to get into the car seat. After a few mild threats I said, "Well, let me know when you figure out who's going to ride there. I can wait." I pulled out a newspaper and began to read. Silence descended on the car. Then, after a minute or so, I heard Mary Kate heave herself into the car seat.

"Liam, I'm doing this for you," she said, "because I know you don't want to sit here even though it is your turn."

Then, realization dawning, she cried, "Mom! It's just like in the song, isn't it? Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants!"

#2 YOU NEVER KNOW WHO MIGHT NEED A PRAYER

When my son, James, was a preschooler, each Sunday after going up to Communion he and my husband would walk over to the vigil lights to light a candle. One year as Christmas approached, they made their stop and my husband asked the usual, "So who do you want to pray for this week?" James named the standard assortment of grandmas, aunts and uncles, finishing up with, "and for King Herod." Herod stayed on the prayer list for several months thereafter. I don't know what effect those prayers had on him, but they did help me to expand my own list of who is worth praying for!

#3 YOU NEVER KNOW WHO IS PAYING ATTENTION

In recent years I have become good friends with Alice, a retired professional woman in our parish, whom I cajoled into serving on the board of our Catholic school. We often attend the same Mass, which means that my son

James, now 11, is sometimes one of the altar servers. Alice and James have a nodding, polite acquaintance. One night while I was driving her home from a school board meeting, Alice remarked how much she enjoyed seeing James do a good job of serving Mass. Then she said, "I don't know if you know this, but my husband and I had a son named James too, and he was killed in Vietnam. So your son has a very special place in my heart."

#4 YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S A BUDDING THEOLOGIAN

Car-ride conversation:

Mary Kate, at age 4: "So mom, can you explain something to me?"

Mom: "Sure, what?"

Mary Kate: "Tell me again how it is that God lives forever but Jesus came to earth and died."

Don't sell your kids short. They may not understand the whole Mystery (who does?) but that doesn't mean that Mass isn't helping them to grow in faith, hope and love.

- Catherine O'Connell-Cahill for Living Faith