

## Self-Guided Parent and Child Preparation Session 2 of 3

**Directions:** If you and/or your child missed the second of the three retreats for First Holy Communion preparation, this guide is for you both. You will need to contact Michelle Sesny to arrange to pick up your children's materials ([mstesny@saintbridgetchurch.org](mailto:mstesny@saintbridgetchurch.org)). The Together in Jesus materials are to be completed at home now that the sessions with catechists are complete.

### **What is my responsibility as a parent preparing my child for First Holy Communion?**

1. To make sure they are over the age of 7 and are baptized in the Catholic faith. If you have not provided baptismal information, **it is imperative that you do so by March 27, 2017.**
2. To celebrate the Eucharist with them at least weekly. (Precept #1)
3. To make sure they are enrolled and participating in the parish religious education program, the Catholic School or an approved Home Study Program during the year they are preparing for First Penance and First Holy Communion. To assure that they are meeting parish established participation rules for concurrent faith formation. This is what will help meet the requirement of "Sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so that they understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and are able to receive the Body of Christ with faith and devotion." (Code of Canon Law 913.1)
4. To attend and participate in all of the parish-sponsored preparation sessions for the parents. If that is not possible, to complete the self-guided preparation process.
5. To see that your child attends and participates in all parish-sponsored First Holy Communion events. If that is not possible, to complete the home-based alternate program.
6. To complete the rest of the curriculum materials at home. Preparation is a partnership between the parents and the parish. Completion of both the parish offerings and the home components constitutes sound preparation.
7. To see that your child is ready to receive First Holy Communion. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has provided these signs of readiness. The child:
  - Has prepared for and received the Sacrament of Penance (parental testimony).
  - Participates in the Mass (Not just goes...participates!)
  - Understands and believes that Christ is present in the Eucharist.
  - Realizes the difference between Eucharist and ordinary bread and wine.
  - Understands the importance of observing the Eucharistic fast.
  - Knows how to receive Eucharist reverently.
8. To communicate with the parish if you are experiencing difficulty in meeting these requirements.
9. To pray regularly for and with your child both at home and during the Mass.

### **Discovering the answers to the questions that formed the basis for Session 2**

1. **Is that really Jesus' body? Is there really blood in that cup?**
  - a. First, remember that in terms of development, children at this age are very literal. That means they are hearing the words "body" and "blood" and interpreting them as they know those words and that would be very literally. This also means they have a hard

time understanding how Jesus is “in” the tabernacle. Clearly, that is not big enough for a body.

- b. This means that you will have to guide their understanding as they grow, moving them from literal to sacramental, by which Catholics mean real. (For a brief academic treatment of this, see “What Everyone Needs to Know about Sacramental Real Presence” by Dr. Rodica Stoicoiu in the list of articles. It’s also why it’s very important for your children to continue in faith formation and for you to do so as well. It takes some work for this to happen. The gift is worth the work!
- c. Finally, be careful about sharing with your children artistic depictions that reinforce the literal. It is very hard to get those literal images out of their heads and it is nearly impossible to move them from the literal until they mature a bit more.
- d. The answer to these two questions is both “No” and “Yes.”
  - i. From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1376 “The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: “Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.”
  - ii. Watch Bishop Robert Barron on Real Presence:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgy\\_TFelyiM&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgy_TFelyiM&t=5s)
    1. **With your children:** Have a conversation about what makes their best friend their best friend, or what makes a beloved grandparent so special. Guide their responses so that they begin to discuss that they are funny, and always there for them, and bring gifts, and like them just the way they are. The list could go on but what you will want to point out to them is that what makes each of those people special is not their body or their blood, but their qualities.
    2. **With your children:** In another conversation, ask your children how you are like their grandmother or grandfather, or like a brother or sister. What do you have in common? And then ask them how they are like their siblings or mother/father. As you have this discussion, help them see that we become like those who have a lot of influence on us. Sometimes people even say things like “You are JUST LIKE your Dad!”

**Helping your children reach a beginning understanding:** What the words “body” and “blood” help us to understand is that everything that makes Jesus, Jesus is what he gives to us: his mercy, kindness, patience, compassion, love, wisdom and more. What is so special about Holy Communion is that all of that is really contained in bread and wine, so that we can take it into ourselves and become just like Jesus. And it is through the special words, spoken by the priest who is for us our real presence of Christ when he is guiding the Mass, that unleash the power of

the Holy Spirit to change that bread and wine. *It is very important that you help them understand that it is NOT the priest who changes the bread and wine, it is the Holy Spirit working through the priest.*

- iii. Go to <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-of-jesus-christ-in-the-sacrament-of-the-eucharist-basic-questions-and-answers.cfm> to read what the US Catholic Bishops teach about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist

## 2. What's with all the ritual?

- a. The focus on this question came from Msgr. Carr's observation that participation in the ritual dialogue, postures and gestures is uneven. He very much wants all of you and your children to understand a bit of the why behind the what, and to encourage you to fully engage in the rituals of the Mass.
- b. This presentation focuses on three functions of ritual in a religious context:
  - i. Ritual makes the ordinary extra-ordinary. Going into church is not the same as going to the grocery store.
    - 1. Sign of the cross
    - 2. Genuflection or bowing
    - 3. Kneeling to pray before Mass begins
    - 4. The ritual dialogue that opens Mass continues to unite us, and make this ordinary gathering extra-ordinary
  - ii. Ritual creates a bond within a community that taps into its history
    - 1. Read <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-reception-of-holy-communion-at-mass.cfm> for more about this
    - 2. Please note in the above article the following paragraph: " In the United States, the body of Bishops determined that Communion should be received standing, and that a bow is the act of reverence made by those receiving. These norms may require some adjustment on the part of those who have been used to other practices, however the significance of unity in posture and gesture as a symbol of our unity as members of the one body of Christ should be the governing factor in our own actions."
    - 3. If you are not bowing your head before receiving communion, please begin to do so by bowing at the person in front of you is receiving the Eucharist. Help your children begin to practice this posture at home since bowing is not a common American posture.
    - 4. Watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGkTdv4Dt4>  
Fr. Dave Dwyer Busted Halo Sacraments 101: Eucharist (how we receive)
  - iii. Ritual unifies people and gives them a context in which to talk about their religious experiences.

1. This is a **KEY** function of ritual in the Mass, **to unite us to Christ and to one another**. We come from all over the city, country and sometimes even the world as individuals and families, to be united with one another and with Christ, the head of the Church (the Body of Christ) so that we might give thanks and praise to God through Christ.
  2. Ritual gestures, postures and dialogue make this unity visible, palpable and so able to be shared with your children.
- iv. **With your children:**
1. Teach them the ritual dialogues, gestures and postures of the Mass.
  2. Expect their increasing participation in each of these areas. It is possible to “do” Mass long before understanding it.
  3. Help them to understand what the rituals proclaim about who we are and what we believe (their catechetical materials can help with this). Do lean over and tell them what a ritual means during Mass!
  4. Have them stop participating in Children’s Liturgy of the Word so that they become familiar with all the ritual dialogue, gestures and postures of the first part of Mass and build attention span for an entire Mass.
  5. Resist distractions that keep them focused on activities or messages other than the elements of the Mass.

### 3. How should I respond to “Mass is boring!”?

a. **Two responses:**

- i. Chris Stefanick Mass, Boring?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASeGRlghLBM>
- ii. Bishop Barron: “What if Catholics Find the Mass Boring”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijvugD2Gqxo>

b. **With your children**

- i. Begin to draw parallels to other areas of their life where they “practice” so that they can “play” well. Faith is a practice and it is through the practice that we encounter the Lord Jesus.
- ii. Remind your children that Mass is “work” not play or entertainment. The word “liturgy” means a work of the people and a work for the people. But it is work we want to do because of how good God is to us, now and forever.
- iii. Make sure that your children know other adults and children who worship at the same time you do. Build relationships of love, concern and support with them so that coming to Mass is coming into a feast of loving attention for your children.
- iv. Help your children care for others when you come to Mass: hold open doors, help carry baby supplies, straighten up the hymnals, bring up the gifts, smile and speak to elders, bring a donut to someone, etc.

c. At Home:

- i. Complete Lesson 4 in the Pflaum First Eucharist Material paying special attention to the story of Jesus eating the Passover with his disciples.
  1. Here's a 6 minute dramatic clip of the Last Supper  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnxHmm2RUBU>
- ii. Chapter 4 has a baking and sharing bread activity and prayer ritual. You are strongly urged to do this so that you can make the concept of many parts becoming one (ingredients for bread become bread) and how one thing can be broken apart to feed many (sharing the bread). These concepts are foundational for understanding Jesus calling himself the "bread of life" and why we take, bless, break and share bread.
- iii. Attend Mass and point out to your child the references to bread being broken and shared.
- iv. Call your children's attention to how people are processing to receive communion and begin to practice with them the procession. Have them receive a blessing but also pay close attention to how people are receiving communion.
- v. Ask them what they understand is happening during Mass and what questions they have, or what opinions they have about Mass. Open up the dialogue!
- vi. Complete Lesson 5 in the Pflaum material.
  1. Make sure your children understand the meaning of the word "Eucharist"
  2. Begin helping your children and your family determine what you are grateful for so you can give thanks to God each week for those gifts.
  3. Begin helping your children consider how God will know that they love Him. (Hint: God said He will know of the depth of love by how well we love our neighbors –friends and enemies.)
- vii. Complete Lesson 6 in the Pflaum material.
  1. Finish the "My First Eucharist Book".
  2. Go over the parts of the Mass with your child.
  3. Show them how the worship aid you get each Sunday also has the parts of the Mass in it.
  4. Show them how to find the readings and order of the Mass in the hymnal.
  5. Begin praying prayers of intercession during your family prayer time, remembering those who need God's tender care.
  6. Begin to talk with your child about how your family participates in caring for those who are hurting, lost, neglected, forgotten, poor etc.

## What else is there?

1. Plan to attend the final session on 4/2/17. Contact Michelle Sesny at [mstesny@saintbridgetchurch.org](mailto:mstesny@saintbridgetchurch.org) if you find you will not make the 4/2/17 gathering. Banner making and the Church tour are important pieces of this day. She will help you engage them if you cannot be with the group.
2. Continue to talk about Jesus and the Mass in small spurts. Remember to teach your children the vocabulary of the Mass and decode its movements for them.
3. Eat meals together as much as possible as a family. Fundamental to understanding Jesus' ministry is the meal. Without experiences of the family meal (daily and special occasions), it is very difficult for your child to connect to Eucharist (which is both a sacrifice and a meal) and to Jesus.
4. Continue to practice and pray the Lord's Prayer and a Consciousness Examen. Add to this the Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy, Lord have Mercy from the beginning of Mass. If your child likes language, you might teach them this in Greek: Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison.
5. Read the additional materials provided for you.

## Making sure everything goes well for your celebration:

1. Make sure you have contacted the parish [firstsacramentsbc@gmail.com](mailto:firstsacramentsbc@gmail.com) to schedule the date and time for your child's First Holy Communion.
2. Make sure you have submitted baptismal information.
3. Record the date and time for practice. This is REQUIRED!  
Practices will be held the Thursday before your child receives First Communion. Those receiving First Communion the weekend of May 6th/7th will practice on Thursday May 4th and those receiving the weekend of the 13th/14th will practice on Thursday May 11th.

Here are the practice times, they are organized by the Mass at which you are scheduled.

Saturday 5:30 pm Mass – 4:00 pm practice

Sunday 9:00 am Mass – 4:30 pm practice

Sunday 11:00 am Mass – 5:00 pm practice

Sunday 1:00 pm Mass – 5:30 pm practice

4. Pray for and with your child throughout the preparation process.
5. Attend Mass each weekend and walk your child through its parts, expecting their participation in the ritual dialogues, postures and gestures.