

Sacrament Essentials

First Eucharist

Practical tips for preparing your child to receive the Lord



Jun 2014

Feature Article

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June 2014



This Month...

- Su 1 **The Ascension**
- Fr 6 St Marcellin
Champagnat
- Su 8 **Pentecost**
- Fr 13 St Anthony of
Padua
- Su 15 **Holy Trinity**
- Th 19 St Romuald
- Sa 21 St Aloysius
Gonzaga
- Su 22 **Corpus Christi**
St Thomas More
- Fr 27 Sacred Heart of
Jesus
- Sa 28 Immaculate Heart of
Mary
- Su 29 **Sts Peter and Paul**
- Mo 30 First Martyrs of the
Roman Church

For Catholics, Sacraments are a big deal. They are major maturing milestones in our faith life, and often the centre of our communal life. Despite their centrality, many parents feel ill-equipped to prepare their children for the Sacraments, relying instead almost solely on the parish and Catholic school.

Over the coming year, CathFamily will dedicate an edition to each of the seven Sacraments with a mind to provide parents with practical tips and helpful insights so that you can better participate in the preparation of your children for the greatest gift you will ever give them, their faith through the sacraments.



Eucharistic

Theology in a Nutshell

The sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacred meal where we break bread and share the one cup that has been transformed into Christ's body and blood. It is the paramount sign of our unity with and in Christ. It has been described as the 'source and summit' of the Church's life. When we receive the Eucharist we receive Jesus in an extraordinarily intimate way: we take him into our very being in the form of food (his body) and drink (his blood).

It's a profoundly intimate gesture, similar to the way husband and wife becomes 'one flesh' in the marital embrace.

In fact, St Pope John Paul II, and many of the mystics and saints before him, wrote extensively about how Jesus' love is like marital love. Jesus described himself in scriptures as 'the bridegroom'. The Eucharist expresses the intimate, passionate love of Jesus – he yearns to be one in body and soul with us, to be in 'communion'.
(See page 16 for more)



Eucharist Basics...

We all know that kids don't pay attention to what we say, but they observe more astutely and perceptively the things we do. For this reason, the starting point for any preparation is always refreshing our own understanding of the Sacrament and committing ourselves more deeply to the living of our faith.

God invites us to ask: how much do I understand of the Eucharist? How willing am I to let the reality of this profound Sacrament take root in my heart? Do I consistently show my understanding in my words and actions? Do I have a visible and consistent personal prayer life?

Being Catholic is not a destination – it's a journey of growth. The Eucharist is one of those mysteries that is continuously revealed, deeper and deeper, throughout our life. The following Quiz is not a test – it's an opportunity to explore some of the deeper meanings of the Eucharist.



How much do you **know** about the **Eucharist?**

1. Eucharist means:

**2. The Catholic
Faith requires all
Catholics to:**



Answer 1.

'Eucharistia' is a Greek word which means 'thanksgiving'. It was adopted in the sometime in the first century where it first appeared as a verb in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (11:23-24). Thanksgiving is the response of a grateful heart and is the foundational disposition for every Christian as we approach Mass. We begin by remembering everything that God has given us, especially our salvation in Christ. This gratitude leads us to give praise and thanks to God and helps us see more clearly how much we need God's mercy. These ideas are reflected in the prayers at the beginning of Mass - the **Penitential Rite** ('Lord have Mercy' etc) and the **Gloria** ('Glory to God in the highest' etc).

Answer 2.

We are required to attend Mass every Sunday and to participate in the celebration. For most of us, this includes receiving communion, though there can be good reasons why someone might not take communion such as needing to go to Confession or having only just finished eating. In these situations, we are encouraged to make a Spiritual Communion: a wilful dedication to Jesus, as we invite him into our heart. (See Seasonal Notes). Spiritual Communion is a great practice to teach children before they make their First Eucharist as it prepares them for their eventual physical communion.



3. 'Transubstantiation means:

4. During Mass, the role of the Priest is?

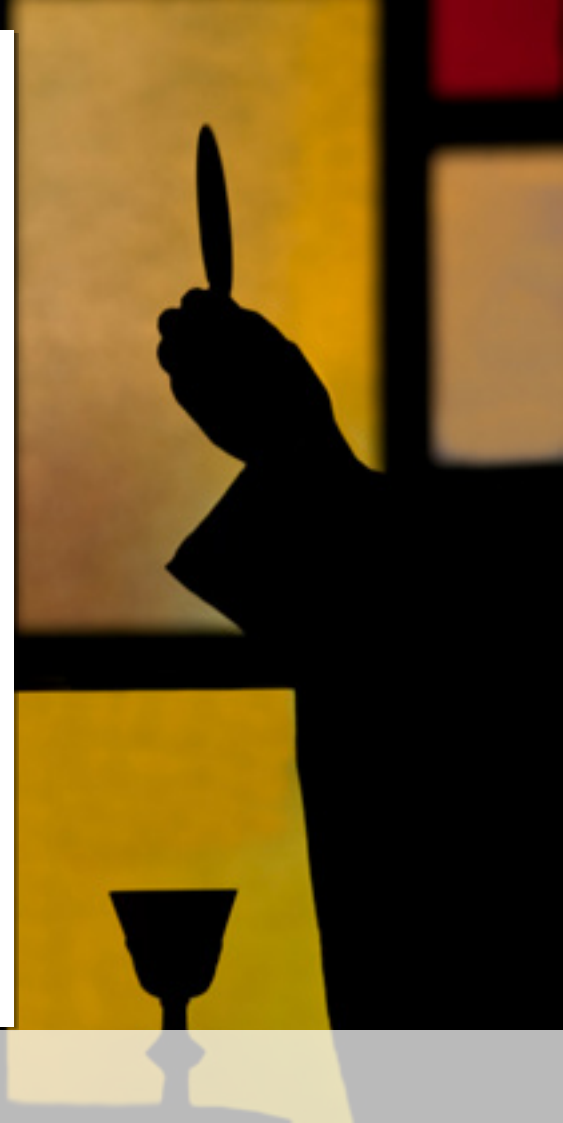


Answer 3.

This is the literal definition of the word, but all these things do happen at Mass as well. It is a mysterious metaphysical transformation. Whilst the form of bread and wine stays the same (i.e. It tastes, smells, feels and looks like bread and wine), the substance is transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. That is, the core essence of 'bread' and 'wine' are now the Body and Blood.

Answer 4.

The Priest is all of these things. Although other people in the church can be pastors and community leaders, only an ordained priest can assume the role of *Alter Christos*. During the most sacred part of the Mass, beginning with the **Preface** and the **Holy Holy**, through to the **Great Amen**, the priest assumes the person of Christ himself. We join with the angels and saints in heaven as we gather around the heavenly altar as Christ breaks the bread and blesses the wine, as God transforms them into his body and blood. Christ is truly present in the form of the priest, just as his body and blood become truly present in the bread and wine. It is as if heaven touches earth and we are united with all our brothers and sisters, living and dead as we worship the Lord.



**5. We use Bread
and Wine at Mass
because...**

**6. The correct way to
receive communion
is...**



Answer 5.

Bread and wine are ordinary every day substances that become sacred by our offering them to the Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit coming down on them. In continuity with the mystery of Christ's passion and Paschal (Passover) sacrifice, we never use other substances.

Answer 6.

It's fine to receive the communion host on either the hand or the tongue according to personal preference. If you choose to receive the host on the tongue, make sure that you open your mouth and extend your tongue sufficiently so that the minister can place it on your tongue without getting his/her fingers licked. If you choose to receive the host on the hand, make sure that your hands are clean, free of clutter and held at chest height. The right hand should go under the left hand to form a 'throne'. If receiving the precious blood from the cup (chalice), take the cup in both hands and drink as you normally would. Although some people continue to dip the host into the cup, this is not correct and represents a significant health hazard as people's hands and fingers touch the insides of the chalice and dip into the precious blood.



Tips to Prepare your Child for First Communion



1. Make mealtimes special.

Just as the Eucharist is at the heart of the life of the Church, family meals are the heart of your home, the 'Domestic Church'. In the lead up to the First Communion Day, use your family meals as an opportunity to share memories of your own First Communion or ask your child what they are learning in their preparation classes.

2. Pray for your child during their preparation time, especially at Grace before meals. Place their photo in your family prayer space or on the fridge to remind you. Invite their Godparents to pray also.

3. Prayer Space. Put symbols of the Eucharist in your family prayer space, like wheat, grapes, or picture of the Last Supper.

4. Shop for a special outfit.

The tradition of a white dress and veil for girls or suit for boys comes from the theological links between the Eucharist and the heavenly wedding feast.

5. Organise a godparent date:

It takes a village to raise a child and this is a perfect opportunity for godparents to participate concretely in their godchild's faith journey.

Celebrations

First Communion is a big deal. This is the first time your child will enter fully into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, physically and spiritually. So here are some ideas to specially mark the day.

1. Throw a Party! It doesn't have to be an elaborate or expensive affair but make a cake, invite family, friends and godparents and spend an afternoon celebrating. After all, this is a 'wedding' which is never complete without a feast!

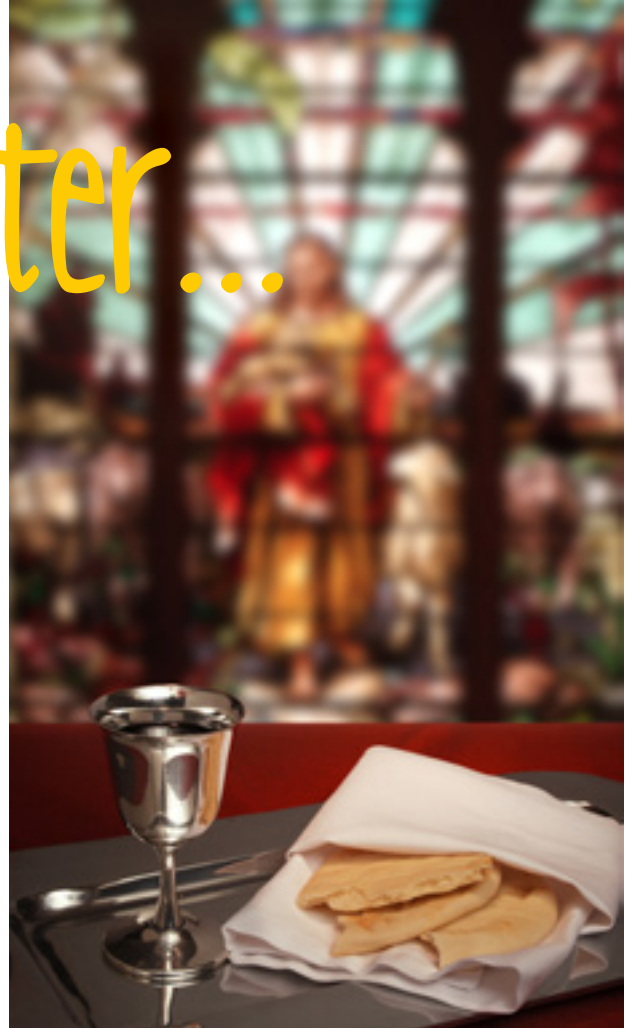
2. The gift that gives life.

Expensive toys or treats are not really in the spirit of this event. Rather, give gifts that encourage your child's faith life, choose like a missal, an adult's bible (for future use), rosary beads, religious jewellery such as a crucifix or miraculous medal, books about the lives of the saints, a cross, crucifix or artwork for their room.



The Day after...

Many parishes don't offer First Communion under both species. If this is the case in your parish, as soon as possible after First Communion Day, take your child to a Mass where they can experience receiving both the Body and the Blood of Jesus. In fact, the weeks following First Communion is a time of deep receptivity for your child when he/she will be open to going to weekday Mass... so make the most of it.



You can't give what you don't have...

Here are some additional resources to deepen your own understanding of the Eucharist and equip you to introduce your children to their Lord.

- Sacraments 101 from Busted Halo
- Pope Francis to Parents: Importance of the Eucharist
- Fr Robert Barron: The Real Presence
- Why Can't Non-Catholics Receive the Eucharist?
- Sacrament of Eucharist as a Meal
- CathFamily: Prayer on the Run- your go-to guide to establishing simple daily habits of prayer for your family.
- Christopher West: God, Sex and the Meaning of Life (we promise this is relevant!)
- *Man and Woman he created them: A theology of the body* | St Pope John Paul II.

Not for the faint-hearted, this large tome is totally worth it. St Pope John Paul II with profound insight draws out the divine plan for the human body and the incarnation.



Wrap up...

Our children's sacramental preparation is a wonderful opportunity to go deeper with our own faith and understanding. It is also an excellent time to let the kids lead. Children are naturally spiritual and very deeply so. The key to raising your kids with a deep, rich and healthy faith is to help them transition to an adult understanding of their faith whilst maintaining that natural, childlike spirituality and faith in the Heavenly Father.

So don't let such an excellent opportunity get lost in the hustle and bustle of everyday life! These are precious moments that will stay with us for our lifetime and beyond. We aren't just setting our kids up for their natural life; we are preparing them for eternity! Let's make it count.



SmartLoving™ The Word made Flesh

Byron & Francine Pirola

When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, Jesus' body and blood is taken into our bodies, where it is digested and incorporated into our own flesh – we literally become 'one flesh' with him. That's why we also call it 'communion', because we become **one** in body and soul with Jesus.

Marriage lives this mystery in a very concrete way. When husband and wife make love, they are saying with their bodies "Take, this is my body, I give it to you. This is my life-blood poured out for you". In their sexual union, husband and wife become one flesh, a communion of two in one.





“ The expressions referring to care for the body, and above all for its nourishment...suggest ... a reference to the Eucharist, with which Christ in his spousal love, ‘feeds’ the church. ... these expressions ... indicate the specific character of conjugal love, especially of the love by which the spouses become ‘one flesh’.

St Pope John Paul II Theology of the Body, n 92. pg 486 ”

The one flesh union of marriage thus **images** the relationship between Christ and the Church. This is what it means to be a Sacrament. A Sacrament makes visible in the physical dimension an invisible, spiritual reality. Our sexual union is sacramental, making visible and concretely accessible the mystery of self-giving, fruitful love between Jesus and his Body, the Church. We cannot ‘see’ Christ loving the Church, but we can see husbands and wives loving each other. So our love as spouses makes Christ’s invisible love visible to the Church.

A Love of Intimacy

Each of the seven Sacraments in the Church reveal an important dimension of God's love. However, the Sacraments of Communion, Marriage and Priesthood all draw our attention to Jesus' passionate gift of self. His love for us is **spousal** in nature. It is a love of intimacy, of urgency, of intimate knowledge, and passionate other-centredness.

Like husbands and wives, Jesus is passionately in love with us; he desires to be one with us. Marriage therefore, is vitally important to the Church and our understanding of God. Without marriage, we can be tempted to focus on the benevolent love of God and overlook the important spousal love, which is intimate and passionate.

The scriptures often refer to Jesus as 'the bridegroom'. If Jesus is the bridegroom, we are the bride and heaven is the eternal wedding banquet.

For more on this topic, visit smartloving.org



Seminars | Resources | Articles

Find out more about Catholic marriage and how you can enjoy deeper intimacy and spiritual connection.



But wait...

There's more!

Articles

God is Here: The Eucharist

At Table with the Lord

Craft and DIY:

Corpus Christi Bleach Banner

Corpus Christi Stained Glass Window

First Communion Card

Communion Colour-in

Prayers:

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

Pentecost

Happy Birthday!

Firey Pentecost Sweets

The Charisms of Marriage

Feast of the Sacred Heart

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

Sacred Heart Puzzle

Litany of the Sacred Heart



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prepare your kids
for First Eucharist**

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