

10 Ways for Parents to Prepare Children for First Holy Communion

(Adapted from Sr. Janet Schaeffler)

Parents/Guardians: If you're asking the question, "How can we prepare our child for First Holy Communion?," your child is already growing up in the atmosphere where believing, knowing, and experiencing God just runs in the family. It is part of the fabric of your everyday life.

The first and foremost "things to do" to prepare your child for First Holy Communion are:

1. Realize that you already have been preparing your child for First Holy Communion since the day he/she was born. Eucharist is about the absolute love of God for us. The way you have loved, cared for, and modeled forgiveness speaks of the unconditional love of our God. Our most intimate experiences of God's presence with us often occur within the everyday moments, interactions, and relationships of family life. The challenge is that sometimes we are so busy that we miss them. Family life is holy and sacred. That is where God is.
2. Talk together. Tell stories about your God moments. Use Scripture stories. Answer their questions, even the ones they're not asking!
3. Stress the connection of Baptism and Eucharist. Get out your photo albums and recall your child's Baptism. Unpack the Baptismal garment and tell its history, when and where you bought it or who made it, who else wore it, etc. Participate in the Easter Vigil as a family.
4. Celebrate the liturgical seasons at home: observe Lenten rituals but remember that Easter lasts for fifty days – how will you celebrate that? Read Scripture stories, celebrate baptismal anniversaries, take out family members' Baptism and First Holy Communion photos, etc.
5. Put a little extra into family meals (they have a big connection to Eucharist!). Let your child decorate the table for an evening meal. Talk about special meals your family has shared.
6. Pray often as a family and make it a natural part of family life: mealtimes, bedtimes, happy times, worrisome times, after an argument, when someone is in trouble, always on special occasions (Thanksgiving, birthdays, and baptismal days, etc.).
7. Make Mass a family event. Sit near the front. Point out one or two things each week for your child to watch for. Talk about the homily on the way home. Before

liturgy talk with your family about who you want to pray for during the General Intercessions; and what you want to thank God for during the Eucharistic Prayer.

8. Grow together in appreciation of God's Word. On Saturday evenings, read the Scriptures you will hear at Mass. What is God saying to your family this weekend?
9. Take a tour of your church. Point out to your child where they were baptized, show him/her the altar up close, the tabernacle, the oils, etc.
10. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that celebrating Eucharist commits us to the poor (#1397). Together fix a meal for a neighbor in need, sort through toys and clothing for gifts to the poor, visit a nursing home, add family money to a charitable donation.