



Parents preparing Children for First Communion

"Do you believe in God?" the catechist asked.

The child replied, "Yes!"

"Why do you believe in God?"

The child thought a moment, "I don't know why. I think it runs in the family."

Your child is growing up in an atmosphere where believing, knowing, and experiencing God simply runs in the family. You as a family bring them forward to prepare for Confirmation and First Communion. Being Catholic is part of your everyday life, and there are lots of ways you can prepare your child for Confirmation and First Eucharist:

1. Realise that you already have been preparing your child for Confirmation and First Communion since the day he or she was born. Eucharist is about the absolute love God has for us. The ways you have loved, cared, and asked for forgiveness speak towards your unconditional love of our God.

Our most intimate experiences of God's presence with us often occur within everyday moments, interactions and relationships of family life. The challenge is that sometimes we are so busy that we miss these precious moments. Family life is holy and sacred, and that is where God is.

2. Talk together - tell stories about times you have shared with God. Use scripture stories or wonderful children's literature. Answer their questions, even the ones they are not asking!
3. Stress the connection of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Get out your photo albums and recall your child's Baptism. Unpack (or talk about) the baptismal garment and share its history: when and where you bought it, who made it and even who else wore it.
4. Celebrate the liturgical seasons at home: Advent wreaths, putting up the crib, reading scripture stories, celebrating baptismal anniversaries, talking about family members' baptism, first 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 with them about special meals your family has shared.

6. Pray as a family on a consistent basis and integrate it as a natural part of family life. Good times to pray as a family are, mealtimes, bedtimes, happy times, worrisome times, after an argument, when someone is in trouble and always on special occasions such as birthdays, baptismal days, first day of school, etc.
7. Make Mass a family event. Sit near the front and point out one or two things each week for your child to watch for. Talk about the homily on the way home. Before Mass, talk with your family about who you want to pray for during the Prayer of the Faithful 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. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that Eucharist commits us to the poor (#1397.) Together fix a meal for a neighbour in need, sort through toys and clothing as gifts to the poor, visit a nursing home or donate to charity.
10. Keep first Communion first. It should be just what we call it: first. Don't put so much emphasis on this one. It's important because it is the first of many, the first of a lifetime of coming to the table.

In reality, most of these suggestions are not just about preparation for Confirmation and first Communion, they are about living in the beauty of the Catholic family.

