



Communion

Sacred Meal

For Catholics, the sacrament of the Eucharist is a sacred meal where we break bread and share the one cup. 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 believe that we receive Jesus in an extraordinarily intimate way: we take him into our very beings in the form of food (body) and drink (blood). It's a profoundly intimate gesture, similar to the way husband and wife become 'one flesh' when they make love. In fact 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 the scriptures as 'the bridegroom'. Eucharist is all about the intimate, passionate love of Jesus – he yearns to be one in body and soul with us, to be in 'communion'. If you'd like to learn more about Jesus' spousal love, see the website, under 'the Theology of the Body' (www.cathfamily.org).

Ways to prepare for and celebrate your child's First Communion

- 1. Make meal-times 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 First Communion Day, use your family meals as an opportunity to share memories of your own first Communion or ask your child about 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. Gifts that give life.** Expensive toys or treats are not really in the spirit of this event. Rather give gifts that encourage your child's faith like Rosary beads, a Sunday missal, story book of the saints, a bible, a crucifix etc.
- 4. Prayer Space.** Put symbols of the Eucharist in your family prayer space, like wheat and grapes or a picture of the last supper.
- 5. Get to Mass.** It sounds obvious, but if you want your child to understand the importance of this sacrament, you have to make Sunday Mass a priority in your own life. Children learn more from our actions than from our words. Your example will be far more influential in your children's faith development than what he/she learns at school!
- 6. Body and Blood.** Many parishes don't offer first communion under both species. If this is the case, as soon as possible after their first communion, take your child to a mass where they can experience receiving both the body and the blood of Jesus.
- 7. Build communion at home.** Like marriage, the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity. Working towards deeper intimacy and stronger unity in our adult relationships as your child prepares for the sacrament is a powerful gift of love.
Couples: rekindle the romance of your love as a prayer intention for your child.
Widowed parents: Envelope your child in the memories of your love, share your faith in the resurrection.
Divorced parents: work at forgiving your ex-husband/wife, speak positively about him/her and refrain from criticising or undermining him/her.