

Together in Jesus

Director's Handbook

Confirmation, First Eucharist,
First Reconciliation Preparation



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Together in Jesus Director's Handbook
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Pastoral Vision

Together in Jesus is the name and purpose of this program, which prepares primary-age children for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. *Together in Jesus* also provides a combined Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation for children in parishes and dioceses that practice the restored order of the Sacraments of Initiation and confirm children before they receive First Communion.

Most children who use *Together in Jesus* are journeying into the Catholic Church through sharing the faith of their parents. They have been born into both the love and the faith of their families. When parents ask the Church to baptize their children, they promise to teach them to love God and to share the joys and the hopes, the struggles and sorrows of their neighbors.

To express the unity of the three sacraments of initiation, young people renew their baptismal vows both before the bishop confirms them and before they receive First Communion. When children receive the sacraments in the restored order, they renew their baptismal vows just once.

Children baptized as infants grow up experiencing the faith of parents and the parish community as their own. They absorb with their senses the sights, sounds, and smells of worship—the glow of candles, the melodies of praise, the warmth of handshakes of peace, the shuffling steps of old people on their way to Communion. Their journey of faith is as gradual as growth itself.

At about age seven children reach the age of reason or discretion. At this age the Church

welcomes children who were baptized as infants to complete their initiation through the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist. The Church wants children to have the opportunity for First Reconciliation before receiving First Eucharist. Usually children prepare in second grade for these growing-up moments in the family of God.

First Eucharist

Together in Jesus provides primary-age children a simple, six-lesson preparation for First Eucharist. The lessons invite them to:

- recognize Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation;
- explore how the Christian community remembers and celebrates Jesus in its liturgy;
- dramatize the Gospel stories of Jesus feeding multitudes and eating a last supper with his friends;
- make connections between family meals and Eucharistic meals;
- do hands-on activities that involve them concretely in doctrinal concepts;
- pray with other children;
- and work with parents at home on parallel themes and activities.

Together in Jesus provides eight lessons for children preparing to receive Confirmation and First Eucharist in the restored order of the sacraments of initiation. The eight lessons include six on Eucharist and two on Confirmation. The combined preparation is for use in dioceses and parishes that want children sealed in the Spirit before the

parish community welcomes them at Jesus' table. The two Confirmation lessons invite children to:

- explore how the Spirit has acted in the history of the Israelites;
- celebrate the Church's birthday on Pentecost;
- explore what the sacramental signs of oil and laying of hands express;
- do hands-on activities that help them recognize the activity of the Spirit in themselves;
- make a Confirmation booklet to learn about the rite;
- explore the gifts of the Spirit with their parents at home.

First Reconciliation

First Reconciliation preparation calls children to begin a lifelong conversion to Jesus and his way of living. Primary children begin this journey in their concrete worlds of home and school, where they can experience how loving actions build a Christian community of trust among them. *Together in Jesus* calls children to keep the Commandments, to love and forgive each other as Jesus teaches, and to make peace with family members, classmates, and neighbors. By keeping the Commandments and following Jesus' teachings, all Christians build up a community of trust and love that shows we are the people of God.

Together in Jesus provides children's first preparation for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, not their last. Children outgrow their early catechesis as they develop the capacity in the junior high years

to think more abstractly, to reason from principles, to put themselves in others' shoes, and to change because of others' expectations.

Together in Jesus provides primary-age children a simple, six-lesson preparation for First Reconciliation. The lessons focus on six biblical stories as the sources of Christian life:

- Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan;
- The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount;

- Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and merciful father;
- His parable of the unforgiving servant;
- Jesus' Easter gift of peace and forgiveness to his first disciples.

In the *Together in Jesus* program, hands-on activities involve primary children concretely in doctrinal concepts. *Together in Jesus* makes sacramental preparation fun and includes stickers that highlight important concepts.

Prayer rituals conclude each Confirmation, First Eucharist, and First Reconciliation lesson, giving children the experience of being a praying Christian community that praises and thanks God for daily blessings and daily bread and asks God for forgiveness. As the children gather to pray, they experience belonging to a group that remembers and celebrates Jesus and shares his values and rules.

How *Together in Jesus* Approaches First Eucharist: Eucharist Is a Sacrament of Initiation

Together in Jesus rightfully presents First Eucharist as a sacrament of initiation.

For this reason, the program emphasizes that the Eucharist is much more than an individual moment in one's relationship with God. First Eucharist is an important public event in which the community welcomes newcomers to the source of its life—the Eucharist.

In early Church tradition, Eucharist was the third and culminating sacrament of initiation. Today it is often the second. In some dioceses children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation before First Eucharist, a practice which preserves the order in which Christians in the early Church and adults today receive the sacraments of initiation. In the early Church most people became Christians as adults.

Many spent several years inquiring and learning about Christianity before they experienced conversion and came

to believe in Jesus. People who decided to join the community of Jesus' followers received the three sacraments of initiation all at once. Usually the community welcomed new members at the Easter Vigil, celebrating new Christians' death to sin and birth to new life at the same time they celebrated Jesus' death and resurrection.

Those to be baptized were dipped below the surface of a pool of water, signifying their dying with Jesus, and then rose from the water, rising to new life with Jesus. The new Christians put on white robes and were anointed with the Spirit—the Sacrament of Confirmation. Newly bathed in water and sealed with the Spirit, Christians completed their initiation by gathering with their new community around the altar table to share Eucharist.

Whether we celebrate all three sacraments of initiation on one occasion, or, to meet present pastoral needs, spread them over the years as benchmark moments in growing up Catholic, the same

three sacraments bring people into the Christian community today as in the early Church. New Christians are washed in the waters of rebirth, anointed with the Spirit, and share in the Body and Blood of Christ. Children become members of the Christian community through these sacraments and through participating in the community's ongoing worship and work for charity and justice.

Building Up the Body of Christ

Sacraments are ritual actions that create real effects. Eucharist has the effect of creating a community that becomes the sign it celebrates—bread for the world and people committed to pouring out their lives in self-giving as Jesus did. The effect of Eucharist is communion. When we participate in Eucharist the Holy Spirit is at work in us to build up the body of Christ in the world.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reiterates the Second

Vatican Council's emphasis on the importance of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist. "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows" (CCC, #1074). The *Catechism* therefore sees liturgy as the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. Catechesis must be linked to liturgical and sacramental activity, "for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for our transformation" (CCC, #1074).

As does the *Catechism*, *Together in Jesus* sees the liturgy as public work, the original meaning of the word (CCC, #1069). Praising God on Sunday is public work, just as creating a town Fourth of July celebration is public work. The church's liturgy gives us the core rites for celebrating Eucharist and the other sacraments. But church environment, song and music, art and color, symbols and windows, readers and dancers—all contribute to the public work of praising God together and the public work of continuing Jesus' mission in the world. Primary children are not too young to share the ministries that contribute

to our Eucharistic celebrations. They can take up the gifts, pray petitions, create banners, and pray common prayers with the congregation.

Liturgy, especially Eucharistic liturgy, is the action at which the Church is most itself—the body of Christ. At Sunday liturgy children experience the faith of the Church which they have shared along with the faith of their parents as they grow up.

Together in Jesus anchors its First Eucharist preparation in parish liturgical life in which children hear the Gospel proclaimed, witness the community sharing the Body of Christ, and experience people's neighborly care and work in common for justice.

According to the *National Directory for Catechesis*, catechesis for First Eucharist has these aims:

- Teaches that the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples.
- Teaches not only "the truth of faith regarding the Eucharist but also how from First Communion on...they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the

People of God in the Eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters."

- Ensures that the baptized have been prepared, according to their capacity for the Sacrament of Penance.
- Develops in children an understanding of the Father's love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ and of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Teaches that "the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ" and that "what appear to be bread and wine are actually His living body."
- Teaches the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread.
- Teaches the meaning of reception of the Holy Eucharist under both species.
- Helps them to participate actively and consciously in the Mass.
- Helps children to receive Christ's Body and Blood in an informed and reverent manner (127-128).

How *Together in Jesus* Approaches Confirmation with First Eucharist

Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation, the second of the three sacraments through which people become members of the Christian community. In the first centuries of the Church, most people became Christians as adults. The Church welcomed them into the community by baptizing, confirming, and bringing them to

the Eucharist's unified rite at the Easter Vigil. Today some dioceses and parishes have moved to restore the order of the sacraments of initiation and confirm children before they receive First Communion.

From the first Pentecost, Christians have invited others to join them on their journey of faith. Pentecost is the birthday of the

Church. On that day, Peter and Jesus' other disciples preached to the many Jews in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Pentecost. They proclaimed that God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. Their fiery words touched the hearts of many hearers, who asked, "What should we do?"

Peter's answer describes a process of initiation into the new

community. “Repent,” Peter says, “and be baptized in Jesus’ name, so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The 3,000 baptized that day devote themselves to the Apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). From the beginning, Baptism and the gift of the Spirit gather believers into the community that breaks bread, prays, and reflects on Jesus’ teaching together.

As the Church grew, a process for initiating new members developed. People who wanted to become Christians entered a process called the catechumenate, an apprenticeship in Christian life. Catechumens shared the faith life of the community, its celebrations, and living of the Gospels. During this time of coming to faith, the Church prayed for and with the catechumens and celebrated the steps or stages of their faith journey with rituals of welcome and belonging.

Toward the end of their journey, usually the last days of the Lenten season, the Church shared its creed with the candidates. Finally, at the Vigil of Easter, the Church welcomed the candidates into the mystery of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit by celebrating with them the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist.

In early centuries Christians were baptized by being immersed in the water, signifying Jesus’ death. Then they rose from the water, signifying rising to new life with Jesus. The new Christians put on white robes and received an anointing with the Spirit—the sealing with the Holy Spirit that is Confirmation. The Christians newly baptized in water and anointed with the seal of the Spirit completed their initiation

by gathering with the community around Jesus’ table to celebrate and share Eucharist.

As Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, increasing numbers of people joined the Church. The Church also began to baptize infants. The Christian community in the West moved away from baptizing and confirming new members in a single celebration. How Baptism and Confirmation became separate is a complex, pastoral story.

First of all, only the Western Church changed its practice. Through the centuries, the Eastern Church has continued to welcome new members, even babies, by celebrating all three sacraments as a unified rite. Priests have authority to baptize babies into Jesus’ death and resurrection, to seal them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and let them participate in the Eucharist through receiving the Blood of Christ.

The Western Church, however, began to administer Confirmation separately from Baptism so bishops, who could no longer baptize everyone because of the numbers involved, could at least continue to seal all new Christians in the Spirit. As infant Baptism became the rule, the Church began to baptize babies all year long rather than only at the Easter Vigil.

In the early 16th century the Church answered early Protestant reformers by making a rule only priests could receive the Eucharistic cup, eliminating the usual way babies received First Communion. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Jansenist movement, which exaggerated people’s unworthiness and the corruption of human nature, led to infrequent communion and delayed First Communion into the teen years.

In 1910, Pope Pius X lowered the age for First Communion to the age of discretion. This change did not affect Confirmation. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council called for the revision of the Rite of Confirmation to make clearer “the intimate connection of this sacrament to the whole of Christian initiation.”

In the practice still common in the U.S. Church today, parents bring their infants to their parish to be baptized. A priest or deacon baptizes them. In second grade, a child prepares for and receives First Communion. Then in the early or late teens, the young person completes his or her journey into full membership in the community with the bishop’s sealing in the Spirit at Confirmation. This practice creates the perception that Confirmation, which like Baptism, a Christian receives only once, is the sacrament that culminates initiation, rather than Eucharist, the ongoing source and sustaining font of Christian life.

In our time the Church has rediscovered and reestablished the ancient way of initiating new members. Responding to the Second Vatican Council’s call for reform, the Church issued the new Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in 1972. Today, Christian initiation follows the model faith journey this rite outlines.

Restoring the order of the sacraments of initiation restores their paschal character. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist draw the new Christian into the paschal mystery of Jesus’ death, resurrection, return to God, and sending of the Spirit.

In Baptism, a Christian plunges into Jesus’ death and rises to new life, making the same journey Jesus made through death to new life. In Confirmation, a new

Christian receives the Holy Spirit, the Advocate whom Jesus first promises his disciples and then breathes upon them on the first Easter and sends upon them in fiery tongues on Pentecost. In Eucharist, Christians share the Body and Blood of Christ—of his life and love to nourish the Church.

The Holy Spirit in the Bible

In the Old Testament *ruah* is the word for Spirit. It means wind or breath. The *ruah* of God stirs the chaos at creation in Genesis 1:2 and brings the earthling God shapes in Genesis 2:7 to life. The *ruah* of God comes upon David, when Samuel anoints him king (1 Samuel 16:13). The *ruah* of God stirs prophets to speak and brings dry bones to life again in Ezekiel's vision of God's future for the defeated and exiled people of God (Ezekiel 37). The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary to conceive in her the Son of the Most High (Luke 1.35).

The Spirit is as invisible and vital to us as breath. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life, the One in whom we live, move, and have being. The Holy Spirit coexists with our spirit in every moment in our lives.

Like wind, the Spirit blows where it will (John 3.8). Like wind, we see the Spirit in what and whom it moves and animates. Wind tells us how the Spirit acts. Like the wind, the Spirit knows no boundaries, generates power, makes waves, invisibly animates all that is.

The Spirit whom Jesus sends in his absence is with us in every breath of our lives—in anguish and in joy, in regret and in success, in disgust and friendship. The Spirit remains in and with every Christian. The Holy Spirit animates, befriends, and surrounds our world, and our human community, our Church.

The Holy Spirit in Confirmation

Oil and the gesture of laying on hands are the sacramental signs of Confirmation. Oil tells us how the Spirit acts. Oil soothes, heals, strengthens, holds things together and makes gears run smoothly. Oil flows and moves. The oil of Confirmation is perfumed, carrying a sweet smell that invisibly attracts.

Israel anointed its kings with oil (1 Samuel 10:1). The name Christ means the anointed one, the king. Messiah is the word in Hebrew that means the anointed one, the king. To be christened is to have the Spirit of God poured out upon us, to be anointed as kings, prophets, and priests were in Israel's tradition. At Jesus' own baptism, the Spirit rests upon him, anointing him for mission.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter lays on hands to bless believers with the gift of the Spirit. This gesture of raising hands over people's heads expresses both blessing and also expresses a calling down of the Spirit upon those for whom a bishop prays. Sponsors make a similar gesture. They represent the Christian community. They put a hand on the shoulder of a candidate for Confirmation to express solidarity. The community stands with this valued Christian and welcomes him or her to full membership and ministry in the body of Christ.

Parishes that restore the order of the sacraments of initiation prepare children for both Confirmation and First Eucharist in second grade. The Order of Confirmation puts the age for Confirmation at the same age as First Communion (#11). Canon law calls for celebrating Confirmation at "about the age of discretion."

The Church allows national bishops' conferences to set a different age (Canon #891). The bishops of the United States choose not to specify an age. Instead, they allow each diocese to determine their own age guidelines.

As a sacrament of initiation, Confirmation introduces and welcomes children to life in the Spirit of God. Receiving the sacrament does not require full understanding. The sacraments of initiation lead to Eucharist, to ongoing participation in the community's life, and to lifelong transformation in Christ and the Spirit. See the Church's requirements of First Eucharist on page 5.

In identifying the aims of preparation for Confirmation, the National Directory for Catechesis is not specific about preparing young children. Its aims for teens and adults include:

- Teaching that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism.
- Teaching that Confirmation strengthens their bond with Christ and the Church.
- Teaching the role, gifts, and fruits of the Holy Spirit.
- Is developmentally appropriate.
- Teaching the Order of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.
- Ensuring parents and sponsors become involved in preparation.
- Teaching the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament (123).

How *Together in Jesus* Approaches Reconciliation

Sacrament of God's Forgiving Love

Compassion and faithful love are distinguishing characteristics of God in the Old Testament history and in Jesus' life. *Together in Jesus* introduces children to the loving God who calls the people of Israel to become a covenant community that keeps the Ten Commandments. The program also introduces Jesus, who from the start of his ministry stands with sinners and welcomes them into his circle of friends.

In the Old Testament's traditions, God is not only creator of all that lives but sustainer and restorer of the people. The God of the Old Testament is slow to anger and quick to compassion. The word *compassion* comes from the Hebrew root *rhm*, which means womb. *Compassion* means feeling toward another as if he or she were the child of one's own womb. Just as a mother is compassionate to a child, so God is compassionate toward his people, forgiving and renewing the people, remembering and sustaining their community. In fact, the history of God's people begins with him hearing their cries when they were oppressed slaves in Egypt.

God's involvement with the Israelites does not end with sending Moses to lead the Hebrews out of slavery to freedom. God also sustains them in the wilderness, feeds them manna and quail, and provides water from desert springs. Even more, God calls these former slaves to make a covenant in which they become God's people, and I Am Who Am, the One

who brought them out of Egypt, becomes their God. This covenant of belonging has terms—the Ten Commandments. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that the Commandments reveal God's will and God's very self (#2059).

The Hebrew people agree at Mount Sinai to acknowledge that only God is God, to worship no other gods or make no images of God, to worship God on the Sabbath, and to treat others with respect—to honor parents, value life, to tell the truth, to protect others' good names, and to honor people's property and marriage relationships. These ten laws establish the standard for treating one another with the same love God has shown the people. "Moral existence is a response to God's loving initiative," the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states. "It is the acknowledgement and homage given to God and a worship of thanksgiving. It is cooperation with the plan God pursues in history" (#2062).

In the Commandments, Christians inherit much more than some of the world's best-known do's and don'ts. The Commandments are a gift for forming community. The Commandments show us today, as they showed the ancient Israelites, how to be human according to God's purpose.

People who keep these laws recognize God loves them and wants them to respond in love. People who keep the Commandments will honor the lives of others rather than take

them in revenge. One can count on another person who keeps the Commandments to tell the truth, rather than a self-serving lie. The Commandments create a community of people who share values and expectations of one another. Their way of living makes God visible in the world and reveals who human beings are meant to be.

Our dignity as human persons is rooted in our creation in God's image and likeness (CCC, #1700). We can freely love God, others, and ourselves as the two great commandments direct, or we can freely forget or disregard God, ignore and hurt others, and place little value on ourselves.

Ever since God gave the Israelites the Commandments, people have both kept them and broken them. Their tradition, which Christians inherit, gives the name sin to the actions people do that break Commandments. Sins miss the mark, strain, alienate, or break relationships among people and with God. In serious sin, relationships go awry, just as in Jesus' parable, the younger son walks away from those who love him most to waste his inheritance on opportunistic friends. Sins are unloving actions that break the agreement binding members of the covenant community.

Together in Jesus introduces primary children to why God's people needed the laws of the covenant. The program helps children explore how the Commandments can help build a community of trust and love. In

the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our compassionate God and Jesus, God's Son, who loves to be with people who want to grow closer to God, forgive our sins and empower us to become more loving.

Jesus' Gift of Peace

Three *Together in Jesus* lessons (3, 4, 5) focus on what Jesus expects of his followers. In his Sermon on the Mount, he calls us to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, share what we have, and love our enemies. In his parable of the prodigal son he shows us in a family context how loving and forgiving God is, how eager he is to welcome a lost son home.

In his Easter evening appearance to the company of his disciples hiding in fear behind locked doors, Jesus brings peace. He forgives these friends who ran for their lives when he was arrested. He forgives Peter, who denied him. He calls these friends he forgives to forgive others and become a peacemaking community.

The new name of the Sacrament of Reconciliation stresses God's power to heal and mend. When we commonly called this sacrament Confession, we stressed the importance of acknowledging our sins. When we called the sacrament Penance, we stressed the importance of making wrongs right, making up for the hurts or losses we caused.

Today we call the sacrament *Reconciliation*, because its ultimate purpose is bringing us back into the community of disciples when we have sinned. Naming our sins (confession) and expressing our sorrow for them (contrition) remain important parts of Reconciliation, as is making up for our wrongful and unloving actions

through prayers and good works (penance).

Peace is Jesus' gift to the friends he forgives on Easter evening. It is our gift, too, in the priest's power to absolve our sins. The priest extends his hand in forgiving our sins, a ritual sign of reconciliation. Jesus' gift of peace calls us to become peacemakers who forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Many parishes celebrate this sacrament communally during the seasons of Advent and Lent. This communal penance service includes both the opportunity for individuals to confess their sins to a priest and the experience of preparing for the sacrament with others. The chance to sing, pray, and reflect on the Word of God together helps people recognize we all sin and all need forgiveness. *Together in Jesus* also stresses the parts of every Eucharist which call us to ask forgiveness of God and one another and to make peace with one another.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that liturgy is public work. Reconciliation is an important part of the public work that extends from the sacraments into children's daily lives at home and school. We acknowledge our sins and celebrate God's forgiveness and Jesus' gift of peace in the sacrament; then we have to live as forgiving and peacemaking people.

According to the *National Directory for Catechesis*, catechesis for First Reconciliation helps children:

- Acknowledge God's unconditional love for us.
- Turn to Christ and the Church for sacramental forgiveness and reconciliation.

- Recognize the presence of good and evil in the world and their personal capacity for both.
- Recognize their need for forgiveness, not only from parents and others close to them but from God.
- Explore the meaning of the symbols, gestures, prayers, and scriptures of the Rite of Reconciliation.
- Understand how to celebrate the Rite of Reconciliation.
- Understand that "sacramental Confession is a means offered children of the Church to obtain pardon for sin, and furthermore that it is even necessary per se if one has fallen into serious sin" (135-36).



Jim Burrows/Bayard, Inc.

Implementing *Together in Jesus* Program Components

Together in Jesus provides parish directors of religious education a ready-to-teach, high-interest program that either parents or catechists can use to prepare primary-age children for First Reconciliation and for First Eucharist. *Together in Jesus* also provides a combined Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation. The combined lessons provide a program for dioceses and parishes that wish to restore the order in which children receive the sacraments of initiation and confirm them before First Communion.

The First Reconciliation and First Eucharist folders contain six children's lessons, stickers, a four-page parent handout, and a Family Time Poster with at-home activities.

The combined Confirmation with First Eucharist folder contains eight lessons for children (six on Eucharist, two on Confirmation), stickers, parent handouts for each sacrament, and a Family Time Poster with at-home activities for both Confirmation and First Eucharist.

In addition, the program provides annotated Teaching Guides for First Reconciliation, for First Eucharist, and for combined Confirmation with First Eucharist preparation. The program provides this *Director's Handbook* for coordinating the programs in parishes.

For Children

Together in Jesus provides six four-page, hour-long children's lessons for First Reconciliation preparation

and six for First Eucharist preparation. These ready-made, hands-on lessons include photos of parish and family life, powerful illustrations of scenes in Jesus' life, and activities to make doctrinal concepts concrete.

The themes of the six First Eucharist children's lessons are:

- I Belong to a Loving Community;
- Our Community Remembers Jesus;
- Jesus Gathers People Together;
- Jesus' Special Supper;
- Our Community Shares a Meal;
- My First Eucharist Book.

Together in Jesus also provides two lessons for primary children on Confirmation, which with the six lessons on Eucharist combine in a preparation program for parishes that wish to restore the order in which children receive the sacraments of initiation. The eight lessons for Confirmation and First Eucharist are:

- I Belong to a Loving Community;
- I Prepare for Confirmation;
- What Happens in Confirmation;
- Our Community Remembers Jesus;
- Jesus Gathers People Together;
- Jesus' Special Supper;
- Our Community Shares a Meal;
- My First Eucharist Book.

The themes of the six First Reconciliation children's lessons are:

- I Belong to a Loving Community;
- We Keep God's Commandments;
- We Can Act Like Jesus;

- Jesus Teaches Us to Forgive;
- We Can Make Peace as Jesus Does;
- I Prepare for First Reconciliation.

Sticker pages accompany the children's handouts. The stickers highlight main themes in each lesson and involve the children in completing their lessons.

For Parents

For each of the sacraments—Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Eucharist—*Together in Jesus* provides special four-page handouts for parents—Questions Parents Ask and a Family Time Poster.

Questions Parents Ask responds to the most common questions parents ask as they help their children prepare for each of the sacraments—First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, or Confirmation with First Eucharist. These readable handouts are a ready-made resource for parent orientation on how the program will involve them and their children in preparing for each sacrament. Directors have the resources in the *Together in Jesus* program to plan a parent night around each sacrament.

The Family Time Poster provides at-home activities to accompany the preparation lessons for each sacrament. On the back of the Family Time Poster parents will find brief parent notes outlining the help only they can provide for their child in his or her sacrament preparations. Each at-home lesson provides a family prayer.

The Family Time Posters for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist provide at-home activities around

the theme of each of the six lessons. The Confirmation Family Time Poster invites the family to explore the seven gifts of the Spirit with the child to be confirmed.

For Catechists

The *Together in Jesus Teaching Guides* provide simple, step-by-step plans for teaching effectively each First Reconciliation lesson, each First Eucharist lesson, or each Confirmation/First Eucharist lesson. These plans annotate reproductions of the pages of the children's lessons.

The lesson plans also identify materials needed for each lesson as well as opening prayers and closing rituals for each lesson. The prayer ritual for each First Reconciliation and First Eucharist lesson is a reproducible blackline master at the end of each lesson. The prayer rituals for Confirmation are on the back page of the children's lessons. The Confirmation lesson plans include a reproducible art activity for each of the two lessons. Either parents or parish catechists can use *Together in Jesus* to prepare children for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, or Confirmation with First Eucharist.

In addition to lesson plans, the *Teaching Guide* presents the pastoral vision of the *Together in Jesus* program, theological background on each sacrament, practical help for working with primary-age children and varying activities during one-hour sessions, and a chapter on nurturing faith in young children.

For the Director

This *Together in Jesus Director's Handbook* provides the director of religious education with tools and models for implementing and tailoring the program according to local diocesan and parish needs

and customs. The same handbook serves the First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation with First Eucharist programs.

This *Director's Handbook* provides a planning process for scheduling parent orientations and children's preparation. It suggests a calendar directors can fine tune to their needs. It includes Church Search, a visit to the parish church, to use as an optional parent/child experience with First Eucharist, lesson 7.

The *Together in Jesus* program places the two Confirmation lessons after Eucharist Lesson 1, which introduces the sacraments of initiation. The *Teaching Guide* for Confirmation/First Eucharist provides a special, restored-order registration form for combined Confirmation with First Eucharist preparation. This edition also provides a special Lord's Prayer handout for use in the parish Rite of Enrollment.

Using the Program in Parishes

The director of religious education coordinates how children, parents, catechists, and pastors take part in parish sacramental preparation programs. The six ready-made, easy-to-teach *Together in Jesus* lessons for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation and the eight restored-order Confirmation/Eucharist lessons can work flexibly at the core of various models of parish sacrament preparation. The two most common models are the catechist/parish-based model and the parent/home-based model.

Parish-Based Model

The catechist/parish-based model centers preparation in the education rooms of the parish where children come together for 60-75 minute classes with a catechist. The size of the parish determines

the size of classes. It is ideal for large parishes to provide a catechist for every eight to ten children or to pair catechists with larger classes. These classes can meet once a week for six weeks to use the *Together in Jesus* First Reconciliation and First Eucharist lessons or once a week for eight weeks with the addition of the two Confirmation lessons with First Eucharist.

When children join in classes with other parish children, *Together in Jesus* provides the Family Time Poster for parents to use at home to support the teaching catechists do. The directors have the work of planning orientation nights to introduce parents to each of the *Together in Jesus* sacrament preparation programs—First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. Directors have the option of planning a single night for restored-order Confirmation with First Eucharist preparation.

In the catechist/parish-based models, parents take part in their children's sacrament preparation through the at-home activities and orientation nights as well as by participating in their child's Rite of Enrollment, in class prayer rituals whenever possible, and any other family activities the parish plans. Only parents can add a personal dimension to the child's Confirmation and First Eucharist preparation by retelling stories and showing photos of the child's Baptism and early life, and to the children in First Reconciliation preparation by helping them identify real ways they need to grow more loving in daily family life.

Home-Based Model

For many reasons—parents' preference, lack of parish educational space, lack of catechist volunteers—parish personnel and parents of parish second graders may opt to use *Together in Jesus* in a home-based, parent-as-catechist model. Parents will find *Together in Jesus* easy to work with in teaching their own children in a home-based program. The stickers alone make the program fun and build easy avenues for teaching basic concepts in concrete ways.

In the parent/home-based model, directors of religious education need to orient parents to the *Together in Jesus* program not only as parents who will use the Family Time Poster and Questions Parents Ask handout, but also as catechists who need to know how to prepare and teach the lessons.

Parents will need to set aside and establish regular lesson times for working together with their child. These may be the same 60-75 minute times as a class, or parents may wish to do part of the lesson every other day and complete a lesson over the course of a week. Parents will need to make sure they have the necessary materials for each lesson, and if possible, celebrate as a family the prayer rituals that conclude each lesson.

Two families or neighboring families may wish to work together in preparing their children. Teaching basic sacrament preparation can be profoundly renewing for parents, to whom the lessons provide opportunity to reflect on and share more explicitly what they believe and model.

When parents are the catechists of their own children, the parish has the task of creating communal dimensions of the program to bring families together. *Together in Jesus* provides plans for Parent

Orientation for each sacrament as well as a party for children after their First Reconciliation, a Sunday First Eucharist Rite of Enrollment, and a Church Search that involves families visiting the parish church together.

A child's bonds with parents and parish are both invaluable. The *Together in Jesus* program involves parish and parents in working together to deepen children's experience of belonging both to their Christian family (the domestic church) and their parish community of faith (the local assembly of the Church universal).

With Good News for Children

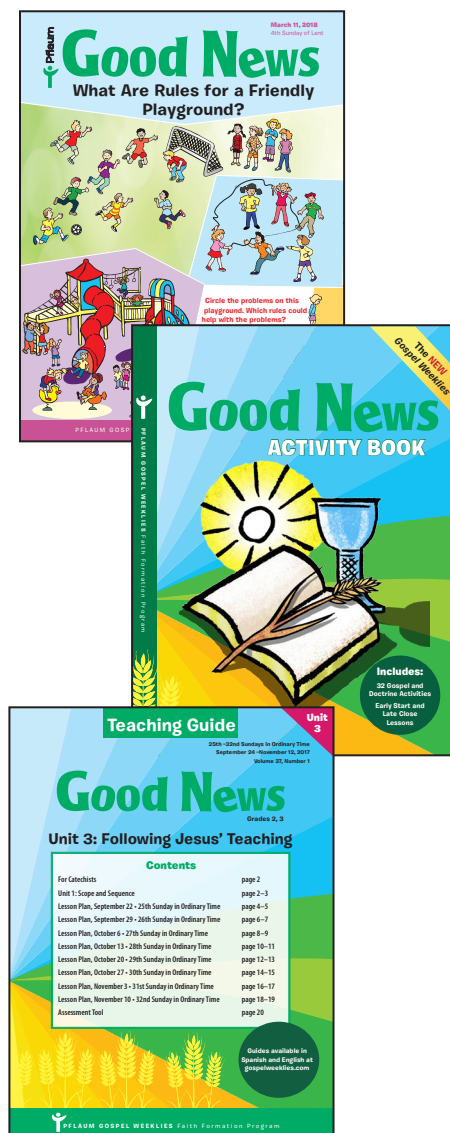
The publishers of *Together in Jesus* also publish *Good News for Children*, the second- and third-grade edition of the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies liturgically-based religion program. *Good News* provides 32 weekly lessons for each of the Church's three lectionary cycles. Its liturgically-based focus orients children using *Good News* toward joining in parish Sunday liturgy.

Through stories, dramas, prayer services, and hands-on activities, each *Good News* weekly invites young children to connect their evolving life story with the Story—the Gospel and its relevance to the purpose of their lives. By wrestling with the Gospel to make its message their own, even at a young age, children grow more able not only to participate in Sunday worship but also to respond to Jesus' challenge to love others and help people in need.

Parishes can substitute First Eucharist lessons for *Good News* lessons and send *Good News* home for parents to use with their children. Parishes can also can take the opposite course, directing

parents to do *Together in Jesus* with the child at home while the parish liturgically-based program using *Good News* continues. Both publications have a four-page lesson format that makes them easy to intersperse.

Many parishes establish a special sacramental catechesis schedule on a different afternoon or evening from regular religious education classes, so second graders can participate in both. For six weeks in fall and six weeks in spring, second graders have sacrament preparation in addition to regular parish religion classes.



Developing Your Parish Program

The director of religious education has the vital role of coordinating how *Together in Jesus* fits into the whole local parish program. *Together in Jesus* is an especially community-oriented program, stressing the parish as a peace-making community of Jesus' followers and a community that welcomes new members to Jesus' table. This chapter includes many practical ways to involve parents, parishioners, and pastors in the children's preparation.

The six ready-made, easy-to-teach lessons for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation and the eight Confirmation with First Eucharist lessons can work flexibly at the core of various parish programs. This handbook provides directors practical help in their work of:

- scheduling the six sessions of preparation for each sacrament or the eight sessions for restored-order Confirmation with First Eucharist;
- recruiting and training catechists or parents;
- registering children;
- gathering children's baptismal information;
- orienting parents to the *Together in Jesus* program and parish plans and requirements for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist;
- involving the people of the parish with the children and their families;
- helping children get to know their pastor;

- helping pastor and parents assess children's readiness for the sacraments;
- selecting Confirmation sponsors from the Christian community;
- working with parish liturgists or liturgy committees to include a Rite of Enrollment in a Sunday Eucharist, to plan the children's first sacramental experience of Reconciliation, to plan a First Eucharist celebration that involves the children and their parents.

Catechesis for First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist is the joint ministry of parents, parish catechists, members of the parish, the pastor, and director of religious education. Parents, teachers, and pastors all have roles to play in helping children decide as individuals when they are ready to receive the sacraments.

Children mature in varying rhythms. Their individual differences must be respected. Parishes have the obligation to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available to all who are properly prepared to receive it. Children should not be forced to approach these sacraments.

Planning Your Parish Calendar

The *National Directory for Catechesis* says that catechesis for the sacrament of Reconciliation normally precedes catechesis for First Eucharist and calls for keeping the preparations distinct "by a clear and unhurried separation" (#135).

In practice, this period of separation is sometimes as little as four to six weeks. The required

separation ensures that children do not get the sense they must regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before Eucharist.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* also says First Reconciliation begins a lifelong process of conversion, an ongoing instruction that keeps calling Christians to transformation in Christ throughout life (#136). Preparation for First Reconciliation must not be children's only instruction in this sacrament. In fact, because initial preparation is suited to children's limited understanding, further instruction must take place to keep pace with children's developing maturity.

Reconciliation preparation can be done in the fall or the Advent season, with Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist preparation in the spring. Or Reconciliation preparation can be done before Lent, with Confirmation with First Eucharist preparation following after a period of separation.

Involving Parents

Parents have the right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. Parents will find that helping their child prepare for participating in First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist will deepen their own understanding and appreciation of these sacraments.

Confirmation Sponsors

The Church encourages godparents to act as children's Confirmation sponsors as part of connecting these two sacraments of initiation.

Sample Parish Sacrament Preparation Calendar

Month	Director of Religious Education	Children	Parents	Parish
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate sacrament preparation program. Survey parents for preference regarding parish-based or home-based models. Recruit catechists; decide if parents will serve as catechists. Order <i>Together in Jesus</i> First Reconciliation, First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist. Preregister children. 			
Mid-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announce in parish bulletin the dates for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, or Confirmation/ First Eucharist preparation classes and parent meetings. Send out an information letter and registration form by mail or distribute at Sunday Mass. 		Register child.	Catechists receive their training.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train catechists or parents as catechists. Invite parishioners to become prayer partners of the children making sacrament preparation. 			Prayer partners volunteer and pray for children.
September/ October/ November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and hold Parent Orientation to introduce the <i>Together in Jesus</i> First Reconciliation preparation program. Children's classes begin. Schedule six 60-75 minute lessons once-a-week over six weeks or every other week. Plan the celebration of First Reconciliation and party. 	Children participate in six First Reconciliation lessons.	Parent Orientation First Reconciliation. Questions Parents Ask Family Time Poster-Reconciliation.	Catechists teach six <i>Together in Jesus</i> First Reconciliation lessons.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parish party for children and parents. 	Celebrate First Reconciliation. Join in parish party.	Join in First Reconciliation celebration.	First Reconciliation Party
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and hold Parent Orientation to introduce the <i>Together in Jesus</i> First Eucharist or Confirmation/ First Eucharist preparation program. 		Parent Orientation. Receive Questions Parents Ask. Identify Confirmation sponsors.	
March/ April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and celebrate parish Rite of Enrollment. Children's classes begin. Schedule six or eight 60-75 minute lessons once-a-week over six or eight weeks or every other week. Have children write letters. Schedule interviews with children and pastor. Set up Church Search for parents, children. 	Celebrate Parish Rite of Enrollment. Children participate in six Eucharist lessons or eight Confirmation/ Eucharist lessons. Church Search	Rite of Enrollment Family Time Poster-Confirmation. Family Time Poster-Eucharist. Church Search	Rite of Enrollment Catechists teach six Eucharist lessons or eight Confirmation/ Eucharist lessons.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help children make an altar cloth and/or banner. Preparation culminates in celebration of First Eucharist or Confirmation and First Eucharist. 	Make altar cloth and/or banner. Celebrate First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist.	Celebrate First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist.	Celebrate First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist.

A sponsor represents the Christian community in the Order of Confirmation. The sponsor stands with the child and offers the community's support in his or her journey into full membership in the Christian community.

Directors can encourage parents to bring their child's sponsors with them to the Confirmation parent orientation meeting. The session will both inform sponsors about the schedule for Confirmation and familiarize them with the emphasis in *Together in Jesus* on Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation and on the Holy Spirit's activity in our history and in ourselves today.

First Reconciliation

Parishes offer parents a vital source of community, a community that values the same Ten Commandments and the same teachings of Jesus they are teaching their children. Through participating in First Reconciliation preparation, children will learn that other parents and the whole Christian community share the same expectations of them as their own parents do.

Parishes also offer families a source of Christian identity and practice. They offer the companionship of other young families striving to raise their children to participate in Church and civic community.

First Reconciliation helps children feel at ease with receiving this sacrament of healing. Lessons 2 and 3 include a child's examination of conscience: Do I Keep the Commandments? Do I Act Like Jesus? Lessons 4-6 include visiting the parish Reconciliation Room, learning the order and parts of the sacrament, and experiencing in the final prayer service an actual or paraliturgical celebration of Reconciliation prepared especially for their primary-age level.

The child's Reconciliation folder and booklet in Lesson 6 includes the Act of Contrition, which children should know by heart. The lesson helps them learn to fill in the ways they especially want to grow. The best way for children to gain ease with the Sacrament of Reconciliation is by joining in the prayer celebrations and experiencing the parts of Reconciliation lesson by lesson.

First Eucharist

First Eucharist should not be a child's only experience of joining the community around Jesus' table, but should be the beginning of regular togetherness with the community that gathers in Jesus' name and shares a meal as Jesus asked. First Eucharist preparation calls parents to make their child's second, third, and fourth Eucharist as important as the first. The sign of this sacrament is eating, an activity humans require regularly. Gathering for Eucharist is the regular, ordinary way Christians nourish their commitment to Jesus and his way of life.

Taking children to church is an important ingredient in every child's First Eucharist preparation. Children are idealistic. They experience painful conflict when they want to attend Mass and parents don't or can't take them. Pastors and catechists need to dialog with parents about Mass schedules that might better fit their busy lives or about a family Mass that features music and participation specially suited for children.

Children can participate in Eucharistic celebrations long before they understand them fully; in fact, they learn through participating. The Church helps parents form children in faith through

belonging to and participating in a worshipping, praying community.

The signs and gestures of the Church's rituals involve the senses and enact Jesus' healing, nourishing, forgiving actions among us. When a child experiences the worship of the Church in song, flowers, color, new clothes, and time set apart, the ritual and the community become deeply rooted, emotional parts of their lives, which they can later reflect upon and understand.

Involving the Parish Community

Pastors

Directors can incorporate plans for children to write letters to their pastor asking to receive First Eucharist and schedule one-on-one interviews between the pastor and each child. Directors can also involve pastors as participants in some of the children's prayer celebrations, so they get to know each other. Having children wear name tags may help in large parishes.

Prayer Partners

Many parishes invite parishioners to become the prayer partners of children who are preparing for First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. Directors can invite parishioners to volunteer through a notice in the parish bulletin and can provide volunteers a small handout detailing the obligations; for example:

- pray each day for the children in a special way;
- arrange to meet the child at church;
- welcome the child for a visit if possible;
- participate in the First Eucharist or Confirmation/ First Eucharist celebration.

Prayer partners give people, especially older parish members, a way to be involved with the young. Praying for each other is an act of Christian community.

Together in Jesus Lesson 1 directs children to interview an adult about his or her faith. This activity aims to have each child meet and share the faith of at least one member of the parish beyond his or her parents. The prayer partner can be the person interviewed.

Banners

One way to mark First Reconciliation and especially First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist publicly is to make a banner for the parish worship space. This banner can have a First Eucharist symbol and saying on it. Or, it can include the names of all the children the parish will welcome to Jesus' table. This banner can stay in the church entry way as a reminder of First Eucharist.

The flames that symbolize the fire of the Holy Spirit suggest a possible parish banner. Families can each prepare a flame with their name and attach it to a mobile that places these flames on pieces of ribbon or string attached to a horizontal bar that can hang in the church entryway or sanctuary. Movement will make the flames dance. See *Flame Pattern, Confirmation and First Eucharist Preparation Teaching Guide*, page 63.

Photos

Putting photos and names of the children in the church entryway will also help people learn to recognize whom they are welcoming to full membership in the Christian assembly. It can be fun to put children's photos up with First Eucharist snapshots of the parents and even grandparents.

Altar Cloth

Having the children join in making a special altar cloth for First Eucharist Sunday is a community building activity both for them and for the assembly which will recognize their presence with them around the altar in a special way because of the cloth. Making multi-colored handprints on white sheeting is one simple way to make a children's altar cloth.

Bringing the cloth to the altar and helping prepare the table is a ministry First Eucharist children can do among the many ministries they perform as part of the First Eucharist celebration.

Liturgical Ministries

First Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation. As children join the Christian community at Jesus' table, they should also take up the ministries of the altar of which they are capable—reading the scriptures, writing and reading Prayers of the Faithful, bringing up the gifts, bearing lighted candles to the reading of the Gospel and/or ordressing the altar.

The children's catechist, the director of religious education, or a member of the parish liturgy committee will need to work with these young children so that they read understandably.

Planning a Reconciliation Service

Lesson 6 of *Together in Jesus* First Reconciliation program concludes with a Reconciliation service, which can be celebrated with a priest as the Sacrament of Reconciliation or without a priest as a prayer service on the theme of reconciliation. Children choose one of the readings they have explored in their lessons

as the reading for the celebration of the sacrament:

- Good Samaritan;
- Jesus' Sermon on the Mount;
- Prodigal Son;
- Unmerciful Servant;
- Jesus' Easter Appearance (John 20.19-23)

This prayer service provides for a communal celebration in which the children sing, listen to the Gospel, confess their sins together, thank Jesus for teaching them to love, thank God for never forgetting them, and make an act of sorrow together.

The communal nature of this service should also include having the children talk with a priest individually, acknowledge their sins, and receive absolution. Directors can play quiet music while the children talk with the priest individually.

Directors have the responsibility to help children feel at ease with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Directors can prepare pastors for talking warmly with children and with the help of catechists prepare children for speaking in their own words about how they need to grow more like Jesus. *Together in Jesus* stresses the positive expectations of the Commandments and Jesus' teaching. Directors can use the examination of conscience that concludes the children's Lessons 2 and 3 as part of the sacrament.

In imitation of the merciful father of the prodigal son who welcomed his lost son home with a grand party, a ring, and new clothes, the parish can celebrate First Reconciliation with a party for their children.

Parish Rite of Enrollment

Together in Jesus Eucharist

Lesson 1 concludes with a Rite of Enrollment. This rite marks Confirmation and First Eucharist as sacraments of initiation, gateways into full membership in the Christian community. This brief rite parallels the Rite of Enrollment for the elect on the First Sunday of Lent.

Ideally, the parish will celebrate this Rite of Enrollment for the First Eucharist children or Confirmation with First Eucharist children and their parents at a Sunday liturgy after the Sunday Gospel and homily. The Rite of Enrollment welcomes children to their First Eucharist preparation classes and provides them a Lord's Prayer scroll.

In giving the children the Lord's Prayer, the parish community hands them the common prayer of Jesus' followers, one Jesus himself taught us, as their heritage. Such a Sunday celebration recognizes that First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist is a parish event that calls everyone to pray and support these children in their preparation. Have parish musicians play and/or sing an appropriate song while parents and children gather at the front of the assembly for the rite and while they return to their seats afterward.

If a Sunday Rite of Enrollment does not fit parish liturgy plans, parents and catechists can still celebrate together the Rite of Enrollment that concludes Lesson 1 and give the children their Our Father scrolls, which include a statement of acceptance into the preparation program.

Planning Confirmation with First Eucharist Liturgy

In *Together in Jesus* Confirmation Lesson 3, the children prepare "My Confirmation Book." This four-page booklet introduces what takes place during the Confirmation rite, including the renewal of baptismal promises. The children identify a gift they want to use for ministry in the Christian community. Directors can explain how this rite fits in the liturgy celebrating Confirmation with First Eucharist.

Planning First Eucharist

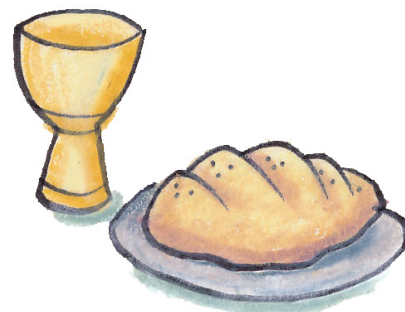
In *Together in Jesus*, First Eucharist, Lesson 6, or Confirmation with First Eucharist, Lesson 8, the children prepare to celebrate Mass by making "My First Eucharist Book." This eight-page booklet reviews the order of the Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist. It contains the children's baptismal promises and reviews the story of Jesus' last supper that the priest prays in every Eucharistic Prayer.

The booklet also identifies ministries children can do in the Christian assembly and leaves spaces for them to choose who will read and bear gifts and to write Prayers of the Faithful. For the director this booklet is a planning device for involving as many children as possible in their own First Eucharist liturgy. Directors can create participation for everyone by such involvements as having children create an altar cloth and assigning children to dress the altar, carry up flowers and candles for it.

Children can use their booklets at their First Eucharist. Some or all of the children can read the Prayers of the Faithful they have written.

The presiding priest can use a copy of the booklet as the source of the baptismal promises he invites the children to make after the homily or during the gathering rite.

Some parishes allow parents and children to decide together when a child will begin receiving First Eucharist and then come to Jesus' table on a Sunday they choose. This honors children's personal readiness. The pastor can then make a point of welcoming the child to the table in a special announcement. Where this is parish practice, the parish can still plan a special Sunday when all the First Eucharist children as a group come together to Jesus' table and make a parish event of welcoming them to full participation in the community's life.



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Training Catechists

This chapter provides the parish director of religious education with all he or she needs to train volunteer catechists and/or parents to teach *Together in Jesus*. Catechists and parents who will be the catechists of their own children should each have a *Teaching Guide for Together in Jesus* First Reconciliation and First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist to bring to this training session.

1. Review the basics of class environment and routines.

a. Class Space. When catechists use *Together in Jesus* to teach groups of children, the program works best with two kinds of space for classes—an open area for gathering children to read, discuss, pray, sing, and move; and work stations at which they can make things, work in small groups, and read together. In addition, there should be a prayer area with a displayed Bible.

Parents who teach their children at home have these same two kinds of space available. A couch or the living room rug makes a good space for reading and discussing. A kitchen table or a child's desk makes a good work station.

b. Class Time. *Together in Jesus* offers a variety of activities to keep primary children attentive. They can pay attention longer to hands-on activities than to verbal activities. They can follow and participate in a 10-15 minute listening/speaking activity.

They can work at a supervised hands-on activity for 20 minutes.

Together in Jesus breaks the 60-75 minute lesson into several parts. Children learn best when parents and catechists vary activities and involve them in seeing, hearing, touching, dramatizing, role playing, and creating. Always take time to look at the illustrations of stories and Gospels. Create as many avenues for remembering as possible. Reinforce children's learning with song, dance, prayer, and visuals.

c. Materials Box. Help your catechists gather the basic materials they will regularly need for class—Bible, scissors, paste, tape, crayons, pencils, colored markers, drawing paper, yarn, scrap paper, and large sheets of newsprint, if the teaching areas have no chalkboard and chalk. Store these materials in easy-to-carry boxes, which teachers can take to class for each lesson.

2. Identify how catechists prepare to teach a lesson.

a. A week before teaching the lesson, read through the lesson plan. Note especially the overview that states the main lesson concepts and the objectives, which identify how each part of the lesson contributes to the whole outcome.

b. Gather together and duplicate materials needed for lesson activities and prayer rituals. Have your catechists find where needed materials are listed in

the introductory sections to each lesson. Note that these directions often include writing out the words to the song for the lesson.

c. Carry the lesson in your mind during the week, learning the story or stories and the objectives of the lesson. Let the lesson speak to you as an adult, too.

d. The day before teaching the lesson, read through the catechist's material again, going through the lesson step-by-step in your mind.

e. Make any adaptation or changes to suit your specific class situation or parish customs. Make notations in your copy of the text of these and any points you wish to remember.

f. Arrive at your classroom area well ahead of the children, so you can arrange the open space and work area recommended in the program and be ready to greet the children when they arrive.

g. Invite catechists to visit pflaum.com/togetherinjesus for catechist support and lesson resources related to this program, including video links, handouts, and more.

3. Help catechists see how a *Together in Jesus* lesson flows.

Each *Together in Jesus* lesson follows a pattern. Each begins with an opening prayer. Each lesson has three or four parts using one or more pages of the child materials. Each lesson ends with a prayer ritual. First

Eucharist includes treats at this ritual to build on children's experience of gathering and eating together. The best preparation for teaching children is to read over the entire lesson plan. Have catechists page through the Teaching Guide and find:

- a. **Objectives for the lesson.** Objectives are like road signs. They tell catechists what each lesson aims to accomplish with the children and how activities fit into its purposes.
- b. **Lesson overview.** This overview presents a brief synopsis of the doctrinal concept of the lesson.
- c. **Materials needed.** This section lists all the preparations a catechist needs to make prior to teaching the lesson.
- d. **Opening prayer.** Each lesson plan provides an opening prayer and song for the children. Parents and catechists should feel free to pray in their own words with children if they choose.
- e. **Music.** The songs in the *Together in Jesus* music program correspond to the theme of the lessons. These songs appear in the *Teaching Guide*, and are also available on the *Together in Jesus* web page on Pflaum.com so

lesson plans regularly suggest writing these words out on paper for the children.

- f. **Lesson plans.** Page through a lesson, noting how sections of the lesson plan match the titles of the parts of the children's lessons. The plans list in italic the amount of time for each part of the lesson. Note that the *Teaching Guide* repeats the objective for each part of the lesson. This is especially helpful if parents teach their children in more than one session during a week.

Lesson plans appear in outline form with key steps in boldface type. Catechists can use their edition with its reproduction of the children's pages and the steps in the lesson plan in close proximity. The lesson plans identify questions to ask, answers, times to change space, creative drama movements—everything catechists need.

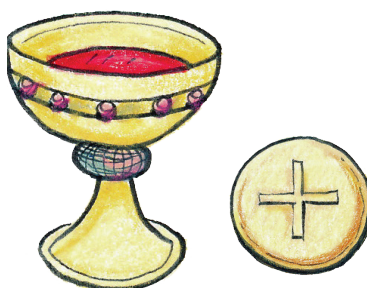
- g. **Prayer rituals.** Each *Together in Jesus* lesson ends with a prayer ritual. The prayer ritual for each lesson is a blackline master that forms the last page of the lesson plan. Catechists will have to duplicate these pages, so each child and parents who come have one. In these celebrations the children pray together and

sing together. They are Church together, because they gather each time in Jesus' name. These small rituals give them the experience of gathering together and praying together at their own age level.

- h. **Treats.** Directors will want to arrange with parents during the First Eucharist orientation night to take turns bringing the treats for the First Eucharist prayer rituals.

4. Identify important ways to nurture the faith of primary-age children.

- a. **Have catechists and parents who will serve as catechists for their children explore Chapter 4 in the Teaching Guide in small groups of three or four.** Have some read aloud Chapter 4 of the First Reconciliation edition, "Nurturing a Spirit of Conversion." Have some read Chapter 4 of the First Eucharist or Confirmation with First Eucharist editions, "Nurturing Every Child's Gift of Faith."
- b. **Give catechists the following questions** to serve as a basis for discussing and then reporting their conversations to the whole group (see next page).



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Nurturing a Spirit of Conversion Questions

1. What does *Together in Jesus* aim to teach primary-age children about right and wrong?
2. What do you think is important for children to understand about the Ten Commandments and about Jesus' teachings?
3. Why is ongoing catechesis necessary?

Nurturing a Sense of the Spirit Questions

1. How does the Holy Spirit act in and among us?
2. How is the Holy Spirit like wind, like fire, like oil?

Nurturing Every Child's Gift of Faith Questions

1. What can primary-age children understand about Eucharist?
2. How has your own understanding of the sacrament changed and grown over the years?
3. How does the place of First Eucharist as a sacrament of initiation change children's preparation for the sacrament from what you experienced as a child?
4. What do you want to communicate to children about the real presence of the Risen Jesus in the sacrament and in the Christian community?

Parent Orientation

First Reconciliation

Announce this meeting at least a month in advance through the parish bulletin, parish-school newsletter, and posters. Use emails, texts, letters, and personal phone calls to reach people who do not respond to the invitation. If the children are

in a parish school or parish religion class, they can take a letter home.

This meeting can be the time the First Reconciliation folders will be purchased, if that is the obligation of the parents, or distributed if the parish has bought them. The folders include six lessons

for children, stickers, Questions Parents Ask for discussion at this session, and the Family Time Poster. Parents can either take the folders home or take their two handouts and leave the children's lessons for class.

Parent Orientation Plan

1. Welcome (10 minutes)

- a. **Introduce parish priest(s)** and catechists, unless parents serve as catechists.
- b. **Describe how parents, pastor, parishioners, and catechists** will work together in the sacrament preparation program.

2. Introduce Reconciliation themes and *Together in Jesus* program. (10 minutes)

- a. **Parents are the primary educators** of their children. Children's ideas of God grow out of their relationships with parents or other significant people in their lives. Receiving forgiveness from parents and seeing parents forgiving one another are vital religious experiences for children. Parents often forgive each other and make up in private; sometimes they should do this in the presence of their children.
- b. **First Reconciliation preparation** is a time for working together on practical ways to show love for one another in daily family life.
- c. **Children benefit greatly** from parents who say I'm sorry and who ask forgiveness when they lose their tempers or

blame the wrong person or jump to conclusions about how thoughtless the person was who made this mess.

- d. ***Together in Jesus*** stresses the positive loving actions that God's Commandments and Jesus' teachings ask of all of us.
- e. **Describe how children** will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in your parish.

3. Faith Reflection (10 minutes)

Have parents talk in groups of four to six about their own present understanding and attitude towards Reconciliation. Encourage them to share their own real feelings as they come to this moment in their child's life. This brief sharing will prepare for working with the *Together in Jesus* handout for parents, Questions Parents Ask.

4. Distribute the *Together in Jesus* First Reconciliation folder. (15 minutes)

Have parents find their handout—Questions Parents Ask.

- a. **Read aloud the first Q/A.** Hold up copies of each of the six children's lessons as you outline their content. Have parents find these in the folders.

- b. **Read aloud the second and third Q/As**, which identify parents' responsibilities. Have them examine how the Family Time Poster works, finding children's activities on side one and parent notes and prayers on side two.

- c. **Have parents work in small groups of four to six to overview the other Q/As they see on their handout.** Ask if they raised any of these questions in their brief reflection. Invite parents to read aloud and discuss any of these questions, but especially, "Why should I prepare my child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation when I hardly ever go?" and "What will my child learn about right and wrong in this program?"

- d. **Call the whole group to attention** and invite parents to raise any unanswered questions.

- e. **Draw attention** to the last Q/A to prepare parents for any special problems.

- f. **Invite parents to visit pflaum.com/togetherinjesus** for parent and family resources related to this program.

5. **Celebrate** one of the prayer rituals that concludes a lesson in the *Teaching Guide*.

Parent Orientation Confirmation with First Eucharist

Preparation

Directors in parishes preparing children for Confirmation and First Eucharist can plan either one parent orientation session, using both this plan on the Confirmation lessons and Chapter 7 on Eucharist, or plan two separate orientations, one for each sacrament.

Ordinarily parishes celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist together in the restored order. Confirmation usually takes place at Mass after the homily. It begins

with candidates renewing their baptismal vows. In the *Together in Jesus* program both “My Confirmation Book” (lesson 3) and “My First Eucharist Book” (lesson 8) include the baptismal promises which they will make only once in the celebration. The director can explain to children how the Order of Confirmation fits within the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

This parent meeting can be the time parents purchase Confirmation with First Eucharist

folders if that is the obligation of the parents, or they can be distributed, if the parish has bought them. The folders include eight lessons for children, stickers, parent handouts on FAQ's about Confirmation and First Eucharist, and Family Time Posters on Confirmation and First Eucharist. Parents can take the folders home, or take only their Q/A parent handouts and posters, and leave the children's lessons for class.

Parent Orientation Plan

1. Welcome (10 minutes)

- a. **Introduce parish pastoral team** members the parents should know.
- b. **Describe how parents, pastor, congregation, and catechists will work together** in preparing the children for Confirmation and First Eucharist.
- c. **Identify parish events for Confirmation and First Eucharist children**—the Rite of Enrollment, prayer partners and/or the flame mobile if you plan to make one for your parish.

2. Introduce requirements. (10 minutes)

- a. **Talk through the time frame** in which the parish expects parents who are preparing their children at home to complete their catechesis.
- b. **Outline the two parish classes** children will attend to prepare for Confirmation and how these lessons fit into First Eucharist preparation.

c. Parents have Family Time

Posters for at-home activities and prayers for Confirmation and First Eucharist.

3. Faith Reflection (10-15 minutes)

- a. **Distribute 3" x 5" index cards.** Have parents describe the Sacrament of Confirmation as they learned about it when they were confirmed. Ask: What is Confirmation? What do you remember about receiving this sacrament?
- b. **Collect the cards.** Have parents form small groups at tables or in circles of chairs. Redistribute the cards. No one can get his or her own card. Have the small groups read and discuss what the cards describe about Confirmation. Eliminate the card that describes Confirmation least well. Do this three times, each time redistributing cards from group to group and eliminating one.

- c. **Have each small group read the card** that they select as the best description of Confirmation.

4. Restored Order (15 minutes)

- a. **Introduce the concept of the restored order** of the sacraments of initiation.
- b. **Distribute the *Together in Jesus Confirmation with First Eucharist* folder.** Have parents find the handout Questions Parents Ask About Confirmation, Have them read aloud pages 1-2.
- c. **Invite them to compare** their experience of Confirmation with its place as a sacrament of initiation today.
- d. **Invite parents to raise questions** and respond to them. Have parents look over the other questions that the handout answers. Read aloud the answer to the question on page 3, column 3, and the question that follows on page 4, column 1. These describe the content and approach of *Together in Jesus Confirmation*.

e. **Note:** parents must provide their children's baptismal certificates.

f. **Invite parents to visit pflaum.com/togetherinjesus** for parent and family resources related to this program.

5. Sponsors (5 minutes)

a. **Explain to parents that the Church recommends having godparents act** as sponsors to stress the continuity between their role at Baptism and their

role at Confirmation. Parents cannot serve as their children's sponsors. However, any active Catholic can represent the Christian community as the sponsor of the child taking the steps into full membership in the Body of Christ.

b. **Sponsors have three responsibilities.** They bring candidates to receive the sacrament. They present them to the minister for anointing.

They help the young person fulfill their baptismal promises.

6. **Celebrate** the Pentecost prayer ritual (Lesson 3, page 4).

7. **First Eucharist** Do steps 3,4, and 5, p. 21.



Jim Burrows/Bayard, Inc.

Parent Orientation First Eucharist

Preparation

This meeting can be the time the First Eucharist folders will be purchased, if that is the obligation of the parents, or distributed if the parish has bought them. The folders include six lessons for children, stickers, Questions Parents Ask for discussion at this session, and the Family Time Poster. Parents can either take the folders home or take their two handouts and leave the children's lessons for class.

Because First Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation, parishes should expect First Eucharist children to know the common prayers of the Christian community, so they can participate in praying them. Duplicate and distribute to parents the Prayers (First Eucharist Preparation *Teaching Guide*, page 7), which identifies the prayers children should know. Request that parents listen to their children pray these prayers. Children

sometimes have words wrong because they learned the prayers by rote when they were too young to know what the words meant.

Catechists can take their children to church for a visit. However, the director can organize a parent/child Church Search, using the cards in this book. This will provide another way to involve parents in their child's preparation.

Parent Orientation Plan

1. Welcome (10 minutes)

- a. **Introduce** parish priest(s) and catechists, unless parents will serve as catechists.
- b. **Describe** how parents, the pastor, parishioners, and catechists will work together in the sacrament preparation program.
- c. **Name parish events** for First Eucharist children—the Rite of Enrollment, prayer partners, the Church Search, and the First Eucharist Sunday.

2. Introduce requirements. (10 minutes)

- a. **The National Directory for Catechesis** directs catechists and designers of curriculum to teach children that the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ, to teach the main events in Jesus' life, and the actions of the Mass.
- b. **Distribute Prayers page.** Explain your parish requirements for learning these prayers.

- c. **Explain the importance of parents** going to church with their children. (See page 12.)

3. Faith Reflection (15 minutes)

- a. **Ask parents to make notes about their memories in response to these questions:**
 - What did the table you sat around as a child look like? Who sat where?
 - With whom did you usually share Thanksgiving dinner as a child?
 - What did your grandparents' table look like? What do you remember about eating with them or with someone who was like a grandparent to you?
 - Where and with whom did you eat Christmas dinner? When did you move to the adult table? How did the adults include you when you ate with them?
 - What food is special in your family?

- b. **Have parents share in small groups a memory of the meal**

that meant the most to them in their childhood.

- c. **Conclude by stressing that this exercise immersed parents in the concrete memories** through which children understand and build up more adult meanings.

4. Distribute the *Together in Jesus First Eucharist* folder. (15 minutes)

- a. **Have parents find their handout—Questions Parents Ask.** Hold up copies of each of the six children's lessons as you outline their content. Have parents find these in the folders.
- b. **Have them read the next two Q/A's silently.** Ask for any questions.
- c. **Read aloud to the whole group the first Q/A on page 2,** which identifies parents' responsibilities. Have parents examine how the Family Time Poster works, finding children's

activities on side one and parent notes and prayers on side two.

- d. **Move parents into small discussion groups** to read aloud and discuss the next two QA's on how they participate in their children's First Eucharist preparation.
- e. **Have parents look over the other Q/A's** in the handout and raise any unanswered questions they have with the whole group.

f. **Draw attention to the Q/A's at the bottom right** of page 3 to alert parents to special problems.

g. **Invite parents to visit pflaum.com/togetherinjesus** for parent and family resources related to this program.

5. Celebrate a Prayer Ritual (10 minutes)

- a. **Note that children will share a treat with each prayer ritual.** Have parents sign up to bring simple food like juice and snacks.
- b. **Celebrate one of the prayer rituals** that concludes a lesson in the *Teaching Guide*.



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Church Search Cards

Directors of religious education have permission to reproduce the following Church Search Cards. The *Together in Jesus* program recommends that you put these cards on cardboard backing and place them at the appropriate places around the church for parents and their children to visit, read, and discuss.

Church Search

Take your child to see and visit each of the following as part of getting to know his or her parish church. You can follow any order. Each Church Search Card has a paragraph to read and a question to discuss with your child. Check off each place you visit.

- 1. Our Church Building, Holy Water Font
- 2. Pews, Windows, Statues
- 3. Stations of the Cross
- 4. Choir, Organ
- 5. Reconciliation Room
- 6. Sanctuary and Altar
- 7. Ambo, Lectionary
- 8. Tabernacle, Sanctuary Lamp
- 9. Crucifix
- 10. Easter Candle
- 11. Presider's Chair
- 12. Baptismal Font
- 13. Sacristy, Sacred Vessels
- 14. Vestments
- 15. Holy Oils
- 16. Hosts
- 17. Incense and Censer
- 18. Liturgical Year

1. Our Church, Holy Water Font

The church building is a home for God's people, the Church. We enter by the front door and find a holy water font. We dip our fingers in the holy water and bless ourselves with the Sign of the Cross when we enter the church. This water and the Sign of the Cross remind us that we became members of this church at our Baptism.

To make the Sign of the Cross, dip the fingers of your right hand lightly in the holy water and make the Sign of the Cross saying,

In the name of the Father (*touch your forehead*)
and of the Son (*touch your stomach*)
and of the Holy (*touch your left shoulder*)
Spirit (*touch your right shoulder*)
Amen. (*bring your hands together*)

What does the holy water font help us remember?

2. Pews, Windows, Statues

The benches we sit on in church are called pews. We genuflect before we enter the pew. We touch one knee to the floor when we genuflect. This action shows respect for Jesus' real presence with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

The windows of the church building often tell stories. They show scenes from Bible stories or from the lives of saints.

The statues in our church remind us of holy people who have followed Jesus in the past. Often churches have statues of Mary, Jesus' mother, and of St. Joseph, his foster father.

What stories do the windows in our church tell?
Whose statues are part of our church?
What do you know about these people?

3. Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross tell the story of what happened to Jesus on Good Friday, the day he died on the Cross. Usually a church has seven stations on one side wall and seven on the other side. Some churches have 15 stations. The 15th station reminds us that

Jesus rose to new life on Easter. It reminds us that we are Easter people who celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead.

Choose one of the stations. Walk up to it and look at the picture. What is happening to Jesus in this station?

What story do the Stations of the Cross tell us?

4. Choir, Organ

Music helps lift up our spirits to God in praise and thanks. Every parish community needs people who will share their talents to play instruments and sing.

Where is the space for a song leader or choir in your church? Where is the organ or piano? What other musical instruments do people play at Sunday Mass?

What is your favorite church song?

5. Reconciliation Room

The Reconciliation Room is a special place where people receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Reconciliation means making peace and bringing people together. This is the sacrament in which God forgives our sins.

In this room, we can sit down in a chair across from the priest and talk with him face to face about how we have failed to love and how we want to grow. Or, we can kneel in front of a screen and talk to the priest through the screen. Try out the chairs and kneeler.

What sacrament do we receive in this room?

6. Sanctuary and Altar

The sanctuary is the front part of the church building where the altar and the lectern stand. The altar is a special table. The community of Jesus' followers gathers with their priest around this table and shares the meal as Jesus taught us at his last supper.

At Mass, we bring our gifts of bread and wine to the altar where the priest asks the Holy Spirit to come upon our gifts and change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. A white cloth covers the

altar. The altar cloth is like a table cloth at home.

A crucifix and two white candles are usually on or near the altar when our community gathers to worship. We light the candles during Mass to remind us that Jesus is present with us.

The Roman Missal is the large book of prayers from which the priest prays during the Mass.

What happens at the altar during the Mass?

7. Ambo, Lectionary

The place in the sanctuary where the reader stands is called the ambo. This is also where the priest gives his sermons. The Lectionary is the book which contains the readings from the Bible that we hear during the Liturgy of the Word at Mass.

Stand where reader the stands, and open the lectionary. Imagine you are the reader for the community.

What is a story from the Bible you have heard in church?

8. Tabernacle, Sanctuary Lamp

The tabernacle is a special box where the community keeps the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is another name for the body of Christ. The community stores consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. The priest prays at the Mass that the Holy Spirit come upon these hosts and change them into the body of Christ.

The sanctuary lamp is always burning near the tabernacle to remind us that Jesus is present. When we pass in front of the tabernacle and before we enter our pew, we bend our right knee to the floor, or genuflect, to show respect for Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. During the time you are genuflecting, say a short prayer, such as, "Jesus, I love you."

Why do we keep the sanctuary lamp burning near the tabernacle?

9. Crucifix

A crucifix shows Jesus on the cross. It reminds us how much Jesus loves us. He was willing to die for us.

Make the Sign of the Cross together:
In the name of the Father (*touch your forehead*)

and of the Son (*touch your stomach*)
and of the Holy (*touch your left shoulder*)
Spirit (*touch your right shoulder*)
Amen. (*bring your hands together*)

When do you make the Sign of the Cross at home?

10. Easter Candle

The large candle that stands in the sanctuary during Easter time and near the baptismal font during the rest of the year is called the Easter candle. Each year the priest blesses a new candle on Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil. The Easter candle stands for Jesus, who is the light of the world. A candle like this

was lit at your Baptism and you received a small candle lighted from the Paschal candle.

If it is still available, ask your parents to show you your baptismal candle when you get home.

**What do the numbers on the Easter candle say?
Whom does the candle stand for?**

11. Presider's Chair

The priest sits in this chair while he is leading us in prayer during Mass. Try sitting in the priest's chair during this tour of the church.

**What is the name of your parish priest who sits in this chair?
How would you like to be the leader of prayer for the whole church?**

12. Baptismal Font

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we become God's children. We share in God's new life and become members of Jesus' Church. When you were baptized, the priest blessed the water in the baptismal bowl or font and poured some over your head as he said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Each baptized person receives a white garment and a candle. The white garment shows that we have put on the new life of Jesus and will share in his work. The lighted candle symbolizes our faith.

Ask your parents to tell you about your baptism. Who was there? What was the day like?

**What happened when you were baptized?
What do the white garment and candle symbolize?**

13. Sacristy, Sacred Vessels

The sacristy is the room where the priest keeps the vestments and sacred vessels. This room is next to the sanctuary. The priest gets ready for Mass in the sacristy.

The chalice is the name of the cup that holds the wine at Mass. It is like the cup used by Jesus at the last supper when he changed wine into his blood.

Cruets hold the water and wine we bring to the altar during Mass. When members of

the community bring gifts to the altar, they carry the wine in a cruet. The second cruet contains water.

A ciborium is a bowl-like dish that holds hosts which have been changed into the body of Jesus. Some ciboriums are gold, some are made of clay; they each have a cover. The Blessed Sacrament, when kept in the tabernacle, is kept in a ciborium.

**What is a ciborium? What is a chalice?
Which holds the body of Jesus? Which holds the blood of Jesus?**

14. Vestments

The priest wears special clothes for Mass. These clothes are called vestments.

The alb is a long white, loose-fitting garment.

The priest wears a chasuble over the alb. He wears a chasuble of a different color for different seasons such as Lent and Advent.

For example, he wears white at funerals to express our faith that the person who died is at peace with Jesus.

**Look at the many colors and decorations on the vestments.
What colors does the priest wear for Advent? for Lent? for Easter?**

15. Holy Oils

The Church uses three holy oils in the sacraments. The bishop blesses these oils at a special diocesan celebration and each parish receives some for use during that year.

Holy Chrism is the holiest of the oils and is scented with balm. It symbolizes spiritual strength. Chrism is used to anoint people in three of our sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Oil of the Catechumens is used in Baptism and is used in preparing adults who want to join the Catholic community.

Oil of the Sick is used in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The priest uses the oil to anoint a sick person on the forehead and on the palms of the hands.

Smell the Holy Chrism. The balm added to the Holy Chrism makes it smell good.

How do we use oil in the sacraments?

16. Hosts

Hosts are round pieces of bread ready for the priest to ask the Holy Spirit to change into the body of Christ. This bread is made of flour and water and baked in a special machine. When it is finished, the bread looks

like a thick sheet of paper. The hosts are cut with a machine like a cookie cutter. The hosts are packaged and sent to parishes for their use. Some parishes make special bread to use for Communion.

What kind of bread or hosts do we usually use in our parish?

17. Incense and Censer

Small grains of incense, when placed on a burning piece of charcoal, give off a sweet-smelling smoke. People have used incense with their prayer for many centuries.

When the smoke rises up into the sky or to the roof, it is like our prayers, which we believe rise to God. We call incense a sacramental, a sign or a thing that helps us remember God.

The bowl that holds the hot charcoal has long chains on it and is called the censer. The incense is sprinkled over the hot coals. The incense is kept in a little dish that is called an incense boat. During a service in which incense is used, the priest sprinkles a little incense on the burning coals. He then swings the censer as the smoke rises.

Pass around a grain of incense and smell it. How do you like the smell?

18. Liturgical Year

The Catholic Church has a plan for remembering Jesus' story. The plan of readings from the Bible takes a whole year. The Liturgical Year begins in Advent, the season recalling the time people waited for Jesus to be born. Then we celebrate Christmas and remember Jesus' birth.

We remember Jesus' death and Resurrection during Lent, Holy Week, and the Sundays of Easter. On the other Sundays of the year we remember Jesus' teaching and healing.

The rest of the Liturgical Year is called Ordinary Time because the weeks are numbered in order.

Can you tell from the cloth on the front of the altar or from any other decoration what season of the liturgical year we're in now?

First Reconciliation

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Rite of Reconciliation reminds and invites us to experience the continuing forgiveness of God and the mutual support of one another.

Each year our parish introduces young children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Having experienced forgiveness from you and from one another in daily living, they now have the opportunity to experience the loving forgiveness of God in this sacrament.

Please join us for Parent Orientation.

Date:

Time:

Place:

At this meeting we will:

- introduce the *Together in Jesus* First Reconciliation program;
- identify parent at-home responsibilities in the program;
- discuss the theology of the sacrament;
- identify what to expect of the children and how to make them experience ease in receiving the sacrament.

Sincerely,

Confirmation/First Eucharist

Dear Parents,

Each year our parish prepares children for Confirmation and first reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Confirmation and First Eucharist are the second and third of the sacraments of initiation. Baptism is the first. We become members of the Catholic Church by receiving these three sacraments.

Please join us for Parent Orientation for Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Date:

Time:

Place:

At this meeting or meetings we will:

- introduce the *Together in Jesus* Confirmation with First Eucharist program and its approach;
- identify parent at-home responsibilities;
- discuss why our parish follows the restored order of the sacraments of initiation;
- schedule parish Confirmation/First Eucharist events;
- explore the role of sponsors;
- discuss the theology of Confirmation and Eucharist;
- sign up to bring simple treats for the program's prayer services.

Sincerely,

First Eucharist

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Each year our parish prepares children for first reception of the Sacrament of Eucharist. First Eucharist is the second of the sacraments of initiation for most children. We become members of the Catholic Church by receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Please join us for our Parent Orientation meeting.

Date:

Time:

Place:

At this meeting we will:

- introduce the *Together in Jesus* First Eucharist program and its approach;
- identify parent at-home responsibilities in the program;
- discuss the theology of this sacrament of initiation;
- schedule parish First Eucharist events;
- sign up to bring simple treats for the program's prayer services.

Sincerely,

Child's Sacrament History

Name of Child _____
First Middle Last

Date of Birth _____ Date of Baptism _____
Month Day Year Month Day Year

Father's Name _____
First Middle Last

Mother's Name _____
First Middle Last

Church of Baptism _____

Address of Church of Baptism

_____ Street _____ Box

_____ City _____ State/Zip

Date of First Reconciliation _____
Month Day Year

Church _____ Priest _____
Name

Date of First Eucharist _____
Month Day Year

Church _____ Priest _____
Name