

God's Treasure of the Eucharist



Prayer

Thank you, God, for this time together to prepare for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. I ask you to be with me as I learn about the Church. Help me to become a better follower of Jesus and spread his love to others. I ask all this in your name. Amen.



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Welcome

Welcome, children! You are about to start out on an adventure. You are about to discover God's treasure of the sacraments. You will be seeking and finding two wonderful sacraments that Jesus gave us: the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This booklet will explain the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

When you receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, you will grow stronger as a follower of Jesus. You will grow closer to the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit. You will also grow closer to all the members of the Church, especially your friends and family. The Eucharist is a very special gift that you will be able to receive for the rest of your life!

Blessings to you!

All of us at Saint Mary's Press



Chapter 1: We Are Part of the Church



Introduction

How many different groups of people are you part of? One group is your family. Another group is your class at school. Do you belong to other sports or clubs? It is important for us to be part of different groups. God made us to be with others. We receive God's love through other people in the groups we belong to.

The most important groups we belong to are our family and the Church. Jesus started the Church as a special way for us to receive God's love. You became a member of the Church when you were baptized. **Baptism** is the first sacrament every Catholic receives. Now you are preparing to receive another sacrament, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Through these sacraments, God shares his love for us. And he wants us to share his love with all the people in the groups we belong to!

Scripture Story: Every Baptized Person Is a Part of the Church

In the Bible, Saint Paul compares the Church to a human body. Let's see what he says about how the people in the Church should work together:

For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? As it is, however, God put every different part in the body just as he wanted it to be. . . .

All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:14-18, 27)

Christ's Body is the Church. The Church is even called the Body of Christ. The Bible tells us that the Church has many parts or many people. Just as a body has feet, hands, ears, and eyes, the Church has men and women, young people and old people, people of all colors and all countries. No two people are exactly the same, and every person is special.

Jesus wants every person to be a member of his special Body, including you! Each of us has gifts we can use to help the Church spread God's love. Jesus started the Church so we can continue his work of loving and healing the world and its people. As a member of the Body of Christ, how will you use your gifts for helping other people? How will you use your gifts to spread God's love?

God Gave Us the Sacraments

Jesus gave us seven great and holy signs of God's love. These signs are called **sacraments**. The Seven Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Jesus gave the Church these Seven Sacraments to bring us closer to him. The sacraments give us **grace**, the gift of God's life in us. Grace makes us God's children and helps us do good things. We can be sure that when we receive the sacraments with faith, they will accomplish what they signify; that is, they will do in us what the words and actions of the sacraments say they will do. They will help us to be faithful followers of Jesus.

The Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, together, are called **Sacraments of Christian Initiation**. *Initiation* is a word that means "beginning." Receiving these three sacraments begins our life in the Church.

God's Treasure of the Eucharist

The Sacrament of Baptism gives us new life and unites us with Jesus. This is a sacrament you have already received. Most likely, you were baptized

as a baby and probably don't remember it. Your parents or guardians spoke for you and promised to teach you about God's love.

We first received the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. In the Sacrament of **Confirmation**, a bishop or priest anoints us with holy oil. This is a sign that we are given the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and that the graces we received at Baptism are made perfect. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we grow closer to Jesus and closer to the Church. As confirmed members of the Body of Christ, we eagerly take on the Church's mission to spread the Good News of God's love to all, through our words and actions.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament you are preparing for now, as you have already been baptized. We say that the Eucharist is at the heart of our life together as a Church. It brings all Catholics together as one Body and helps us be the best members of the Church and followers of Jesus we can be. After you make your First Communion, you are invited to receive the Eucharist every time you go to Mass, as long as you are not in a state of serious sin.

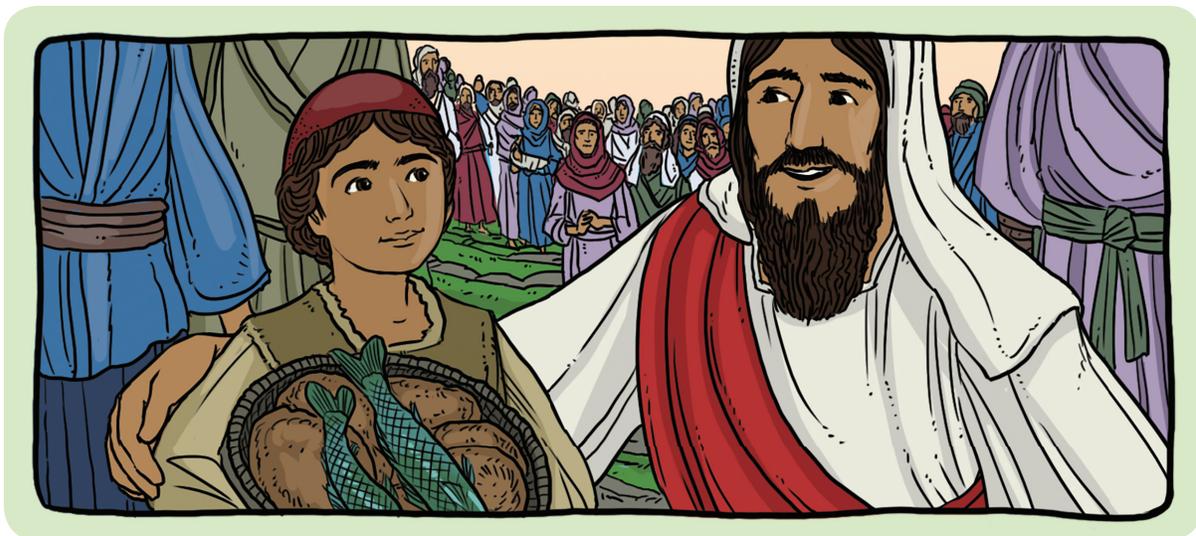
When adults are baptized, they usually receive Confirmation and the Eucharist at the same time. When infants or adults are baptized in the Eastern Catholic Churches, they receive all three Sacraments of Christian Initiation at the same time. This shows that these three sacraments are closely connected.

Things to Remember

- We are all an important part of the Church.
- Jesus gave us the Seven Sacraments. The sacraments are great and holy signs of God's love.
- The three Sacraments of Christian Initiation begin our life in the Church. They are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.
- The Eucharist is the most important sacrament in the Church, and we celebrate it again and again.

Chapter 2:

Jesus Cares for Us



Introduction

There are different ways to show people that you love them. You can give someone a big hug. You can tell them you love them. You can give someone a gift you made for them. You can feed them when they are hungry. Who makes your favorite meal for you?

God also shows his love for us by feeding us. All the food we have comes from God's gifts of earth, sun, and rain. Jesus fed people when big, hungry crowds followed him. He still feeds us today through the Eucharist.

Scripture Story: Jesus Feeds a Huge Crowd

The Bible has several stories about Jesus feeding thousands of people. Let's read one of these stories:

Another one of his disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. But they will certainly not be enough for all these people."

"Make the people sit down," Jesus told them. (There was a lot of grass there.) So all the people sat down; there were about five thousand men. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and distributed it to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, and they all had as much as they wanted. (John 6:8-11)

Isn't it amazing that Jesus fed five thousand men and their families with only five loaves of bread and two fish? Jesus could do amazing things like this because he is God. Jesus cared for the people and did not want them to go hungry, so he fed them. Jesus cares for you too!

Jesus Feeds Us Today

Jesus still feeds us today, every time we attend Mass. During the Mass, Jesus feeds us with the Eucharist, his own Body and Blood. He does this because he loves us. The gifts of bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood during the Mass. You will learn more about that later.

Another name for the Eucharist is **Holy Communion**. The word *communion* means “a very close friendship.” When we receive Holy Communion, we grow closer to Jesus. Through Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit also helps us grow closer to our friends and family.

God’s Treasure of the Eucharist

During the Mass, Jesus cares for us by feeding us with the **Eucharist**. Because of this, the Mass is the most important celebration in the Catholic Church. It is the heart and highest point of the Church’s life. You are preparing to fully share in this life of the Church. During the Mass, we, as members of the Church, participate in Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of the whole world. Through his sacrifice, Jesus gave the Church the treasure of his saving power. Jesus gives this treasure to each one of us when we receive his Body and Blood.

The Mass always has these four parts: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Concluding Rites. Let’s look at these four parts:

- The **Introductory Rites** is the name for what occurs at the beginning of Mass. It includes a gathering song, a procession, the Sign of the Cross, a welcome from the priest, and a prayer asking for God’s forgiveness.
- The **Liturgy of the Word** is the part of the Mass when we listen to the readings from the Bible. After we listen to the readings, the priest or deacon helps us understand them. We also pray a prayer that expresses what we believe in as Catholics. Then we pray for the Church and for all people.
- The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** is the part of Mass where the gifts of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus and we receive Holy Communion.
- The **Concluding Rites** occur at the end of the Mass. The priest blesses us and reminds us that we are called to serve God and others when we leave.

Even though the Mass has four parts, we always celebrate them together as one single act of worship.

Things to Remember

- Jesus cares for us and for all people.
- The Eucharist is a way Jesus shows his care for us by feeding us with his own Body and Blood.
- Holy Communion is another name for Eucharist.
- The four parts of the Mass are the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites.

Chapter 3:

We Ask for Forgiveness



Introduction

Everyone makes bad choices. When we do something bad, it hurts other people. It also hurts our friendship with God. And it even hurts us and makes us unhappy.

Jesus teaches us that when we do something wrong, we need to ask for forgiveness. He teaches that when someone hurts us, we need to forgive that person. This is the best way to make our friendships with God and other people strong again.

Scripture Story: Jesus Teaches Us How to Be Happy

Jesus was a very good teacher. He taught people how to be happy and good. Let's read one of his teachings:

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires;

God will satisfy them fully!

Happy are those who are merciful to others;

God will be merciful to them!

Happy are the pure in heart;
they will see God!
Happy are those who work for peace;
God will call them his children!
(Matthew 5:6-9)

In this passage, what does Jesus teach us to do to be happy? He tells us to obey God's Laws. He tells us to be merciful. This means being kind to people who need help and forgiving people who hurt us. He tells us to be pure in heart, which means being good and avoiding sin. Jesus also tells us to work for peace!

Jesus not only taught these things but also lived them. When we follow his teachings and his example, we will be truly happy.

God's Forgiveness

God wants us to be happy. Sometimes, though, we make ourselves unhappy by doing something bad or wrong. Things that are wrong or bad are called sins. When we sin, we do something God does not want us to do. When we sin, we hurt other people and we hurt ourselves. But we can make things better by asking God to forgive us.

We ask for God's forgiveness in our prayers. We also ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God always forgives us if we ask him. When God forgives us, our sins are all washed away! It's like they never happened in God's eyes. God only asks that we forgive others and that we do our best not to sin again.

God's Treasure of the Eucharist

Asking for God's forgiveness is so important that we do it at every Mass. Do you remember that one of the main parts of the Mass is called the Introductory Rites? During the Introductory Rites, we pray for God's forgiveness. This is called the **Penitential Act**. During the Penitential Act, we do the following:

- say that we are sorry for our sins
- ask God to forgive us for the times we have hurt our friendship with him and others
- promise God in our hearts that we will try to do better

The Penitential Act helps us strengthen our friendship with God. It helps us prepare to listen to the Bible readings and to receive the Eucharist.

During the Penitential Act, the priest or deacon might say, "Lord, have mercy." Then all the people respond, "Lord, have mercy." Then the priest or deacon says, "Christ, have mercy." All the people respond, "Christ, have mercy." Finally, the priest or deacon says again, "Lord, have mercy." All the people respond, "Lord, have mercy" (*Roman Missal*, page 520). Asking for something three times says that what we are asking for is really important.

When we receive the Eucharist, God forgives our less serious, or venial, sins. These are the sins that weaken our relationship with God. Receiving the Eucharist also strengthens us to resist serious, or mortal, sins. These are sins that would separate us from God.

To receive Holy Communion, we must be in a state of grace; that is, our relationship with God and with the People of God, the Church, cannot be completely broken by mortal sin. If someone has committed a mortal sin, they must not receive Communion until they have confessed the sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and received absolution.

Things to Remember

- Jesus taught us that there are actions that lead to true happiness. These include being merciful, being pure in heart, and working for peace.
- God always forgives our sins when we ask him to do so with an honest heart.
- We want to be in a state of friendship with God when we receive the Eucharist.
- We ask for God's forgiveness at the beginning of Mass to prepare for the Eucharist.

Chapter 4:

We Give Thanks to God



Introduction

You have probably been told that people with good manners say “please” and “thank you.” Saying thank you is a way of showing your gratitude and respect to other people. Doesn’t it feel good when someone thanks you?

It is just as important for us to say thank you to God. It helps us to focus on the good things God has given us. Can you think of a person who is very thankful to God for what they have? Have you noticed that this person is also a joyful and happy person? Showing our gratitude and respect to God is key to a joyful life.

Scripture Story: Thank God for All He Has Done for You

Saint Paul reminded the first Christians how important it is to give thanks to God. Let’s read from one of Saint Paul’s letters:

The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one

body. And be thankful. Christ’s message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:15–17)

In this passage, Saint Paul uses a form of the word *thanks* three times: *thankful*, *thanksgiving*, and *thanks*. He is reminding us to say thank you to God every day. Our family, our friends, our food, our homes, our pets, our toys are all gifts from God. When we say thank you to God, we remember that all these good things come from him.

Thankful people are happy people. They are pleased with what God has given them. Some people do not appreciate what they have been given by God. They are not thankful or happy. We have a choice: to focus on the good things in our life or to focus on the bad things. Which would you rather focus on?