

Eucharist Orientation Sessions

Parent Orientation Session: Eucharist

Overview

This one-and-a-half-hour session is for parents whose children will use the *Go Seek Find: Discover God's Treasures* program for Eucharist in a parish classroom setting or who will be preparing their children at home to celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Session at a Glance



A. Welcome, Gathering Prayer, and Icebreaker (15 minutes)



B. Reflecting on the Eucharist (15 minutes)

C. Program Overview (20 minutes)

D. Break (10 minutes)



E. Keys to Effective Sacraments Preparation (20 minutes)

F. Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- a Bible, candle, and other items for the prayer space
- paper, envelopes, and pens
- copies of the following handouts:
 - “Parent Discussion Starters” (Document #: TX005765), enough so that each person present will receive a question
 - “Program Outline: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005766)
 - “Parish Welcome for First Eucharist” (Document #: TX005767) if you will be using this in your parish
 - “Some Dos and Don’ts for Parents: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005768)
 - “Helping Your Child Prepare to Receive the Eucharist” (Document #: TX005769)
 - “Family Prayer before First Eucharist” (Document #: TX005770)
 - “Frequently Asked Questions: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005771)
- manila envelopes, one for each family (for handouts)

- a pair of scissors
- baskets for each table
- blank name tags and markers
- samples of the *Go Seek Find* Eucharist activity booklets, Eucharist treasure map, and Eucharist stickers
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

- Make arrangements to provide childcare during the session. Include this availability in your invitation or advertising. This will likely enable more parents to attend the meeting.
- If possible, have tables and chairs set up for participants. If you don't have tables, arrange chairs so they can be moved easily into circles for small discussion groups.
- Place paper, envelopes, and pens on the tables, one set for each family. You may wish to have extra for unexpected participants.
- Print each handout on a different colored paper for easy identification during the session.
- Place a copy of the handouts in a manila envelope for each family, identified by name on the front of the envelope. Arrange these on a table near the entrance, in alphabetical order, to be picked up by the parents as they enter.
- Make copies of the handout "Parent Discussion Starters" (Document #: TX005765) and cut apart the questions. Place the individual questions in baskets at each table, and make sure there are enough questions for each person at the table. It is okay if several parents receive the same (duplicate) questions at the same table.
- Have blank name tags and markers available for the parents as they arrive.
- Arrange for help with hospitality. Greeters can help families find envelopes and answer questions.
- Arrange to have a podium and microphone present if needed.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation, if helpful, including each handout you will use at this meeting and some samples of the activity booklets, treasure map, and stickers for this program.
- Bookmark John 6:47–51 in the Bible. Prior to the session, as a parent volunteer to prepare to read this passage at the closing prayer. On an index card or slip of paper, write, "A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John" and "The Gospel of the Lord," and place it in the Bible. Suggest that the reader begin the passage with the first phrase and end with the latter one.
- Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants. Consider having some healthy options available.

Session Steps



A. Welcome, Gathering Prayer, and Icebreaker (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the participants and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor and parish catechists if they are present. Ask the parents to take a minute to introduce themselves to others at their table or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the group to recall that they are in the holy presence of God and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** the following prayer:
 - God, our Father, we thank you for your Son, Jesus. He shows us the way to become followers and disciples of his great mission of love, and he reminds us that he is present with us always. Bless us as we prepare for the great sacrament of his love, the Eucharist. Whenever we gather together for Mass, may we feel his presence with us.
4. **Invite** the parents to stand, join hands, and pray the Our Father together. End with the Sign of the Cross.
5. **Encourage** each person to take a folded slip of paper from the basket on their table and reflect on how they would answer the question.
6. **Ask** the parents to take some time to share their responses to the question they picked from the basket.
7. **Invite** volunteers to share some of the insights offered at their table—either their own or those of others. Affirm the parents for the range of feelings they might be experiencing around preparing their children to receive the Eucharist.



B. Reflecting on the Eucharist (15 minutes)

1. **Remind** the parents that the parish is excited to join with them in continuing the sacrament preparation of their children through this time of focus on preparing for First Eucharist.
2. **Point out** that the celebration of First Eucharist is a wonderful experience for their child, but is also a very special time for the whole family.
3. **Offer** the parents some key points regarding the theology of the Eucharist. You might wish to refer to the objectives and key words columns on the handout “Program Outline: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005766). Make sure to include the following points:
 - When you brought your child to the Church for Baptism, your child began a sacramental journey of Christian Initiation. The three Sacraments of Christian Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. You are now helping your child prepare to deepen his or her formation and incorporation into Christ’s Church through the Eucharist.
 - The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. Every part of Christian life springs from the Eucharist and is directed toward it. Because of this, participation in the Eucharistic liturgy is a priority in our lives.

- The Eucharist is a communal meal. It is a sign that shows our unity with Jesus and one another in the Body of Christ. The Eucharist brings us to the Lord's table to worship together, to hear and heed the Gospel, to offer ourselves along with the sacrifice of Jesus, and to receive the bread and wine that is Jesus, the food of eternal life.

C. Program Overview (20 minutes)

1. **Review** the calendar for preparation for First Eucharist. Answer parents' questions about any established parish guidelines regarding preparation for the sacrament or participation in the First Eucharist liturgy.
2. **Direct** the parents to the handout "Program Outline: Eucharist" (Document #: TX005766). Explain that the program consists of ten lessons that follow the Order of the Mass. Tell them that each lesson is rooted in Scripture and focuses on teaching key learning objectives and key vocabulary words important for understanding the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Remind them that each lesson includes various activities that make learning fun, engaging, and meaningful for children.
3. **Show** some samples of the Eucharist activity booklets, pointing out that they are very similar in structure to the ones used for preparation for First Reconciliation. Encourage the families to review the completed activities with their child or complete the activities together if their child did not do so in the session.
4. **Point out** the family page in the activity booklets. Discuss the key parts, and encourage families to review this at home each week and complete as many of the family activities as they can.
5. **Show** the parents "The Order of the Mass and Key Words" booklet. Point out that this is a handy place to review the Order of the Mass, prayers used in the Eucharistic liturgy, and the key words the children will encounter in this program.
6. **Share** an example of the treasure map and stickers the children will be using for this program. Explain that the map is similar to the map they used for Reconciliation and will encourage them to track their progress as they come closer to receiving the Eucharist for the first time.
7. **Review** the outline on the handout "Parish Welcome for First Eucharist" (Document #: TX005767), if you are planning a special parish celebration for those beginning to prepare for this sacrament. Have the parents practice their responses. Ask them to talk to their children about what is going to happen at Mass so they will be prepared.
8. **Refer** the parents to their envelope of handouts and briefly review what they can find there. Answer any remaining questions the parents may have about the program.

D. Break (10 minutes)

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E. Keys to Effective Sacrament Preparation (20 minutes)

1. **Invite** the parents to share in small groups a memory of their own First Eucharist. If some parents are not Catholic, ask them to share anything they might have seen or experienced surrounding this sacrament.
2. **Share** your own memories of First Eucharist, or invite your pastor or catechists to share their First Eucharist memories. Point out the likelihood that because that celebration was years ago, most have developed a much better understanding of the Eucharist and how to live the Catholic faith every day.
3. **Ask** the parents to remember that this is only their child's First Eucharist—it will be up to them to be sure that their child continues to celebrate the Eucharist and receive Communion so that their child's understanding, faith, and relationship with Jesus will grow and deepen.
4. **Remind** the parents that their example of participation in the Eucharistic liturgy and faithfulness to gospel values and Christian morality will have a bigger impact on their children than anything a pastor says in a homily or a catechist teaches in the classroom. Children learn through action and experience, and they learn best when the action or experience is repeated.
5. **Encourage** the parents to make family meals a priority. This is a time when all family members should experience total love and acceptance. Only then can children understand and accept that this is the way God loves them.
6. **Suggest** to the parents that they start or continue to bless their children by simply tracing the Sign of the Cross on their children's foreheads with their thumb. The parents might give this blessing each morning and evening, and whenever their children leave the home and return.
7. **Direct** the parents to the handout "Some Dos and Don'ts for Parents: Eucharist" (Document #: TX005768) in their envelope. Highlight the key points you would like them to understand.
8. **Ask** the parents to write a letter to be given to their child on First Communion day. Provide paper, envelopes, and pens. Tell them to be sure to put their child's full name on the envelope. Some suggestions to get parents started, if needed:
 - How I feel about your First Eucharist
 - What I remember about my First Eucharist
 - How the Eucharist will help you to grow closer to Jesus
 - A promise to celebrate Eucharist as a family
 - Prayers, affirmations of support, and love
9. **Collect** the letters and keep them until the day of First Eucharist. If any parents are unable to complete their letters at this meeting, encourage them to finish their letters at home and return them to you as soon as possible.
10. **Ask** the parents to let you know about any special needs of their family or concerns they have so that you can make accommodations as necessary.
11. **Direct** the parents to locate the handout "Helping Your Child Prepare to Receive the Eucharist" (Document #: TX005769), and encourage them to read through this on their own.

12. **Use** the handout “Family Prayer before First Eucharist” (Document #: TX005770) to explain to the parents that they will be asked to pray in a special way each day during the week before the First Eucharist liturgy. Remind them to keep this handout for use later, and encourage them to include family prayer as often as they can throughout the preparation process. If there is time, review key points on the handout “Frequently Asked Questions: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005771), or invite them to read this at a later time.

F. Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

1. **Remind** the group that they are in the holy presence of God. Allow for a few moments of silence. Then offer the following prayer:
 - God, our Father, you sent your Son, Jesus, to live among us, to share our suffering and our joy. As a sign that we would never be alone, he left us the gift of himself in the Eucharist.
2. **Invite** the reader to proclaim John 6:47–51.
3. **Lead** the prayers of petition:
 - The prayer response is “Lord, be with us.”
 - As we prepare to call your children to the table of the Lord, strengthen us with the Bread of Life. (“Lord, be with us.”)
 - Through your Spirit, give us the knowledge to guide our children and the humility to share honestly with them. (“Lord, be with us.”)
 - For our families and our parish community, we pray that we may be nourished by the Eucharist and supported by one another in lifelong conversion. (“Lord, be with us.”)
 - We pray also for the Church around the world, for unity and for healing from sin and brokenness. (“Lord, be with us.”)
 - May the Lord bless us and keep us. May God’s face shine upon us and be gracious to us. May God be ever with us and give us peace. (“Amen.”)

Parent-Child Orientation Session: Eucharist

Overview

This two-hour session is an orientation for the families involved in preparation for First Eucharist. It includes both individual sessions for parents and children and a combined session for the whole family. The objective of this session is to offer an overview of the sacrament preparation program and the key elements of *Go Seek Find: Discover God's Treasures*.

Session at a Glance



A. Opening Prayer (10 minutes)



- B1. Child Session (30 minutes)
- B2. Parent Session (30 minutes)
- C. Break (15 minutes)



- D. Combined Session (20 minutes)
- E. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- large bins for food donation items
- a Bible, candle, and other items for prayer space
- copies of the following handouts:
 - “Program Outline: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005766)
 - “Some Dos and Don’ts for Parents: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005768)
 - “Helping Your Child Prepare to Receive the Eucharist” (Document #: TX005769)
 - “Family Prayer before First Eucharist” (Document #: TX005770)
 - “Frequently Asked Questions: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005771)
- manila envelopes, one for each family (for handouts)
- samples of the Eucharist activity booklets, Eucharist treasure map, and Eucharist stickers
- materials for child session: room decorations, 12-inch balloons, a marker, paper, and crayons or pencils
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

- Make arrangements to provide childcare during the session. Include this availability in your invitation or advertising.
- When you send invitations or reminders about the meeting, ask families to bring a box of cereal for a local food pantry or crackers for a soup kitchen. Have several large bins ready to accept the donations as the participants arrive.
- Print each handout on different colored paper for easy identification during the session.
- Place a copy of the handouts in a manila envelope for each family, identified by name on the front of the envelope. Arrange these on a table near the entrance, in alphabetical order, to be picked up by the parents as they enter.
- Have blank name tags and markers available for the participants as they enter.
- Set up tables and chairs for the participants. If you don't have tables, arrange chairs so they can be moved easily into circles for small discussion groups.
- Arrange for help with hospitality. Greeters can help families find their envelopes, give directions, answer questions, and so on.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation, if helpful, including each handout you will use at this meeting and some samples of the activity booklets, the treasure map, and the stickers for this program.
- Bookmark John 6:47–51 in the Bible, and invite a volunteer to read this for the closing prayer. You may wish to place a mini-script in the Bible so the volunteer knows to begin the reading with, “A reading from the holy Gospel according to John” and end with, “The Gospel of the Lord.”
- Ask volunteers or catechists to prepare for and lead the child session. They may also want to make arrangements for a tour of the church sacristy if this option is chosen.
- Arrange to have a podium and microphone present if needed.
- Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants. Consider having some healthy options available.

Session Steps



A. Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the participants and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor and parish catechist(s) if they are present. Ask the parents and children to take a minute to introduce themselves to others at their table or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the participants to recall that they are in the holy presence of God and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** the following prayer:
 - God, our Father, we thank you for your Son, Jesus. He shows us the way to become followers and disciples of his great mission of love, and he reminds us that he is present with us always. Bless us as we prepare for the great sacrament of his love, the Eucharist. Whenever we gather together for Mass, may we feel his presence with us. We ask this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

4. **Thank** the families for their generous gifts of cereal or crackers. Mention where they will be used. Remind those gathered that after we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, the priest sends us out to give the Lord. As Jesus feeds us in the Eucharist, he also asks us to feed one another.

Seek

B1. Child Session (30 minutes)

Note: Balloons are used in this activity. If any of the children have an allergy to latex, you should choose a different activity.

1. **Decorate** the room where the children will be for this session with objects of adventure, such as magnifying glasses, treasure chests, treasure maps, telescopes, explorer or safari hats, etc.
2. **Invite** the children who are preparing for First Eucharist to follow the volunteers or catechists into the room.
3. **Explain** to the children that you are going to start an activity where they must help some adventurers get to treasure. Show them a blown-up balloon, and tell them that it represents the first adventurer. Have the children come up with a name for this adventurer, and write that name on the balloon with a marker.
4. **Tell** the children that you will hit the balloon in the air, and then they have to keep the balloon from hitting the floor. The goal is to get the balloon to the other end of the room, which represents the treasure (you can pick a marker in the room as the “goal line” the balloon must cross). Tell the children that they must stay in their seats. You can ask them to imagine the floor as water or as some hazard they and the adventurer must avoid at all costs.
5. **Begin** the game with the first balloon. If the children drop the balloon, start it again from the end of the room. Once they successfully get the balloon to the “treasure,” tell them that they are now going to have two adventurers at a time. Have them name the new adventurer and write this name on the new balloon. Start the game again with two balloons at the same time.
6. **Play** the game multiple times, adding an additional balloon every time the children succeed in getting the balloons to the other side. See how many balloons they can manage to get to the opposite end of the room successfully.
7. **Remind** the children that they recently finished preparation for one of God’s treasures—one of the sacraments. Ask them to recall what sacrament this was (*the Sacrament of Reconciliation*). Tell them that they are going to start another journey of preparation toward another one of God’s treasures—the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Explain that it won’t be a journey quite like the balloon adventurers took toward the treasure, but it’s a journey that they will take with one another, helping and supporting one another along the way. Tell them that it will definitely be a journey of adventure, fun, and discovery that will lead them to a very special treasure—the Eucharist.
8. **Encourage** the children to share some of their favorite parts of their journey of preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Explain that the journey of preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist will be special as well and will lead them even closer to Jesus through his presence in the Eucharist.
9. **Distribute** the paper and crayons or pencils and invite the children to write a short prayer to Jesus, asking him to be with them during this time of preparation.

Note: As an alternative for this time, you may wish to have a sacristan, your pastor, or others take the children to the sacristy to show them the vestments and items used for Mass. Encourage the children to pay attention to the names of the different items, and see how many they can remember. You

might want to have cards with the names next to each item. This way, you can remove the cards, distribute them to different children, and see if they can place their card next to the correct item. Allow the children to help one another.

B2. Parent Session (30 minutes)

1. **Invite** the parents to share in small groups a memory of their own First Eucharist. If any parents are not Catholic, ask them to share anything they might have seen or experienced surrounding this sacrament.
2. **Ask** several volunteers to share with the large group. You may also wish to briefly share your own memories. Show a picture of yourself dressed for First Eucharist, or recount a special memory.
3. **Tell** the parents that the purpose of sharing their own First Eucharist memories is to help them recall some special memories that they can share with their child in the next few weeks. It can also help them realize what their child might be experiencing right now.
4. **Explain** to the parents that many of us remember the feelings of anxiety or anticipation, the gifts, the party, the cake, relatives visiting, and so on. This is all important to our children too. But we also know that our understanding and love of the Eucharist has grown since our First Eucharist, and today we are still nourished by Christ's presence within us.
5. **Invite** the parents to keep in mind that this is their child's First Eucharist—the first of many, the first of a lifetime. The first is important, but so are all the ones to follow. Their job is not finished after preparing their child for First Eucharist. It is also their responsibility to bring their family to Mass every Sunday.
6. **Remind** the parents that their example has a bigger impact on their children than anything a pastor says in a homily or a catechist teaches in the classroom. Children learn by doing, by experience. And they learn best when the action or experience is repeated.
7. **Ask** the parents to locate the handout "Some Dos and Don'ts for Parents: Eucharist" (Document #: TX005768) in their envelope or folder. Highlight the key points you would like them to understand.
8. **Direct** the parents to locate the handout "Helping Your Child Prepare to Receive the Eucharist" (Document #: TX005769), and invite them to read this on their own at another time.
9. **Use** the handout "Family Prayer before First Eucharist" (Document #: TX005770) to explain to the parents that they will be asked to pray in a special way each day during the week before the First Eucharist liturgy. Remind them to keep this handout for later use, and encourage them to include family prayer as often as they can throughout the preparation process. If there is time, review key points on the handout "Frequently Asked Questions: Eucharist" (Document #: TX005771), or invite them to read this at a later time.

C. Break (15 minutes)

1. **Direct** those who are working with the children to bring them back to join their parents and share refreshments.
2. **Invite** the parents to share with their child something about their own First Eucharist. Ask the children to share with their parents something they learned in the church or to discuss an activity they participated in.

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D. Combined Session (20 minutes)

1. **Ask** the children to share with their parents some of their favorite parts (memories, favorite activities, Scripture verses, key learnings, etc.) about preparing for Reconciliation with the *Go Seek Find* program. You may wish to ask several volunteers to share with the large group.
2. **Review** the schedule and calendar with the families for preparation for First Eucharist. Answer questions about any established parish guidelines regarding preparation for the sacrament or participation in the First Eucharist liturgy.
3. **Direct** the families to the handout “Program Outline: Eucharist” (Document #: TX005766). Explain that the program consists of ten lessons that follow the Order of the Mass. Tell them that each lesson is rooted in Scripture and focuses on teaching key learning objectives and key vocabulary words important for understanding the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Remind them that each lesson includes various activities that make learning fun, engaging, and meaningful for children.
4. **Show** some samples of the Eucharist activity booklets, pointing out that they are very similar in structure to the ones used for preparation for First Reconciliation. Encourage the parents to review the completed activities with their child or complete the activities together if their child did not do so in the session.
5. **Point out** the family page in the activity booklets. Discuss the key parts, and encourage families to review this at home each week and to focus on completing as many of the family activities as they can.
6. **Show** the parents “The Order of the Mass and Key Words” booklet. Point out that this is a handy place to review the Order of the Mass, prayers used in the Eucharistic liturgy, and the key words the children will encounter in this program.
7. **Share** an example of the treasure map the children will be using for this program. Explain that this is similar to the map they used for Reconciliation and will encourage them to track their progress as they come closer to receiving the Eucharist for the first time.
8. **Ask** the parents to let you know about any special needs of their family or concerns they have so that you can make accommodations as necessary.

E. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Remind** the group that they are in the holy presence of God. Allow for a few moments of silence. Then offer the following prayer:
 - God, our Father, you sent your Son, Jesus, to live among us, to share our suffering and our joy. As a sign that we would never be alone, he left us the gift of himself in the Eucharist.
2. **Invite** a reader to proclaim John 6:47–51.
3. **Lead** the prayers of petition:
 - The prayer response is “Lord, be with us.”
 - As we prepare to call your children to the table of the Lord, strengthen us with the Bread of Life. (“Lord, be with us.”)
 - Through your Spirit, give us the knowledge to guide our children and the humility to share honestly with them. (“Lord, be with us.”)

- For our families and our parish community, we pray that we may be nourished by the Eucharist and supported by one another in lifelong conversion. (“Lord, be with us.”)
- We pray also for the Church around the world, for unity and for healing from sin and brokenness. (“Lord, be with us.”)
- May the Lord bless us and keep us. May God’s face shine upon us and be gracious to us. May God be ever with us and give us peace. (“Amen.”)