

Tips for Parents of First Communion children

“Do you believe in God?” the catechist asked.

The child replied, “Yes!”

“Why do you believe in God?”

The child thought a moment, “I don’t know why. I think it runs in the family.”

Mums and Dads, if you’re asking the question, “How can we - in our home church - prepare our child for first Communion?” then, your child is already growing up in the atmosphere where believing, knowing and experiencing God just runs in the family. It is part of the fabric of our everyday life. And in reality, that is the first and foremost “thing to do” to prepare your child for first Communion:

1. Realize that you already have been preparing your child for first Communion since the day he or she was born. Eucharist is about the absolute love of God for us. The ways you have loved, cared for and modelled forgiveness speak of the unconditional love of our God. Our most intimate experiences of God’s presence with us often occur within the everyday moments, interactions and relationships of family life. The challenge is that sometimes we are so busy that we miss them. Family life is holy, is sacred. That is where God is.

2. Talk together. Tell stories about your God times. Use scripture stories, the wonderful children’s literature. Answer their questions, even the ones they’re not asking!

3. Stress the connection of baptism and Eucharist. Get out your photo albums and recall your child’s baptism. Unpack the baptismal garment and tell its history: when and where you bought it or who made it, who else wore it. Attend the Easter Vigil as a family.

4. Celebrate the liturgical seasons at home: Advent wreaths, putting up the crib, Epiphany house blessing, reading scripture stories,

celebrating baptismal anniversaries, talking about family members' baptism and first Communion photos, etc.

5. Put a little extra into family meals (they have a big connection to Eucharist!) Let your child decorate the table for an evening meal. Talk about special meals your family has shared.

6. Pray as a family – often and as a natural part of family life: mealtimes, bedtimes, happy times, worrisome times, after an argument, when someone is in trouble, always on special occasions (Thanksgiving, birthdays, baptismal days.)

7. Make Mass a family event. Sit near the front. Point out one or two things each week for your child to watch for. Talk about the homily on the way home. Before liturgy talk with your family about who you want to pray for during the General Intercessions; and what you want to thank God for during the Eucharistic Prayer.

8. Grow together in appreciation of God's Word. On Saturday evenings, read the scriptures you will hear at Mass. What is God saying to your family this weekend?

9. Take a tour of your church. Point out to your child where he or she was baptized, show him or her the altar up close, the tabernacle, the oils, etc.

10. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us the Eucharist commits us to the poor (#1397.) Together **fix a meal for a neighbour in need**, sort through toys and clothing for gifts to the poor, visit a nursing home, add pennies to a charitable donation.

11. Keep first Communion first. It should be just what we call it: first. Don't put so much emphasis on this one. It's important because it is the first of many, the first of a lifetime of coming to the Table. In reality, most of these suggestions are not just about preparation for first Communion, they are about living the wonder of our Catholic family all the time.