

**T**his guide for parents/guardians of children preparing to make their First Communion is an extension of the catechist's edition of *As Without End We Acclaim*. That resource aims to encourage catechists and families to view First Communion preparation not only as a time where we learn about the Eucharist but when we learn how to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

First Communion preparation is a great time to introduce and practice our role as members of the worshipping assembly.

This guide functions primarily as an at-home prayer booklet. These prayers are carefully designed to reflect the rhythms and structures of our common liturgical prayer—namely, the Sunday Eucharist. Because of this, these prayers are meant to be prayed by the whole family together. This is not a personal prayer booklet. Like the Sunday liturgy, these prayers rely on the responses and participation of all involved. It is our hope that by praying this way, we gradually form each other to be ready to participate in and pray during the Sunday Eucharist.

Some of the prayers offered here contain Scripture passages. For the sake of maximum accessibility and understanding, these passages have been simplified and paraphrased for use with young children. In addition to making them easier to follow and understand, they also make the readings more accessible for young children to perform the reading parts.

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Should these prayers become a regular tradition in your household, feel free to substitute the actual Scripture texts as your children get older.

Parents/guardians: beyond anything that this book offers, the single greatest way you can promote liturgical participation for your child is by modeling it yourselves. For many, this might be an uncomfortable step out of one's comfort zone. We encourage you to try your best. Sing at Mass, join in the responses enthusiastically, and perform the various postures and gestures. If attending Mass has not been your routine, this guide can help you too. You and your child can learn together.

## Mealtimes Prayers

The act of gathering for a meal—its conventions, its traditions, its expectations—functions as an effective canvas for teaching about the practice of ritual and symbolism. Just like liturgy, the repetition of these traditions and actions gradually forms us over time and contributes to a sense of identity that is not only personal but communal.

Praying together as a family at mealtimes reflects the progression we experience at liturgy when we move from prayer to meal to thanksgiving to sending forth.

### *Prayer*

**AT MASS:** we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The various postures/gestures, spoken prayers, and sung acclamations are carefully arranged for the worshiping community

to offer thanks and praise for the gifts of bread and wine and to celebrate the Paschal Mystery (the mystery of Jesus' dying and rising for the salvation of the world) as the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

**AT HOME:** we gather for prayer prior to sharing a meal. This prayer unites and honors those who have gathered. Together we offer thanks and praise to God for the blessing of the meal, for the work of those who produced the food, and for any other intentions offered by those gathered.

### *Sharing the Meal*

**AT MASS:** when we receive Holy Communion, we enter in a communal experience where all are fed the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is as the body of Christ that we receive the Body of Christ. The *Catechism* states that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (1324).

**AT HOME:** when we dine together, we share in a meal someone has prepared or acquired for us. Beyond the act of cooking the food or picking it up, we should remember that this food is a gift of someone's labor. From harvest to store to kitchen to table, this meal required the work and love of many people. In addition, when we share a meal together, we share more than food. We share our time, presence, stories, and attention. Providing nourishment for others—physical, social, emotional—is a eucharistic giving of oneself.

## Mealtime Prayers

### *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

**LEADER:** Good and gracious God,  
we thank you for the gift of this time together.  
We thank you for the blessing of this food.  
In praise and thanksgiving, we proclaim your glory!  
Hosanna in the highest!

**ALL:** *Hosanna in the highest!*

**LEADER:** We give thanks for the miracle of God's creation;  
for the air, the soil, the water, and all the life that  
we take as nourishment.

**ALL:** *We thank you, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** We give thanks for the work of human hands  
that produced this food; for all who labored to  
grow, harvest, and share this food.

**ALL:** *We thank you, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** We give thanks for the people here who prepared  
this meal; for those who cooked it [or picked  
it up, or ordered it, etc.], and those who worked  
to obtain it.

**ALL:** *We thank you, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** We give thanks for everyone gathered here;  
for the unique gifts and thoughts they bring,  
for the way they bless us simply with their  
presence.

**ALL:** *We thank you, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** We offer all these prayers through Jesus Christ,  
our Lord.

**ALL:** *Amen.*

### *Prayer of Reconciliation*

**LEADER:** God of mercy and compassion,  
you who teach us to love and forgive,  
we pray for your blessing on each  
of us gathered here,  
and on the food we are about to share.  
As we pray for the grace to follow Jesus,  
we proclaim the glory of your name!  
Hosanna in the highest!

**ALL:** *Hosanna in the highest!*

**LEADER:** Lord Jesus, you died for all our sins. Forgive us  
for all the times we have hurt each other, when  
we have said unkind words, when we have not  
honored the gifts you have given us.

**ALL:** *Show us your mercy, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** Christ Jesus, you promise new life through the resurrection. Help us to forgive everyone who has hurt us. Help us to settle disagreements and promote peace.

**ALL:** *Show us your mercy, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** Lord Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. Bring light to the darkness throughout the world. Put an end to violence and war. Bring healing to all who are in need.

**ALL:** *Show us your mercy, O Lord.*

**LEADER:** We offer all these prayers through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**ALL:** *Amen.*

### *Prayer in Time of Abundance*

**LEADER:** God of infinite abundance, you who give us everything we need, we thank you for the blessing of each other, and the blessing of this meal. As we thank you, we exclaim: Hosanna in the highest!

**ALL:** *Hosanna in the highest!*

**LEADER:** This is a story from the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus saw a large crowd. Moved with pity, he showed kindness to the people and healed those who were sick.

As it grew dark, the disciples came to him and said, "We are far from town and it's getting late. Send the crowd away, so they can go to the village and buy some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

"But we only have five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring the bread and fish to me," Jesus said. He told everyone to sit down on the grass. He took the loaves of bread and the fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks as he divided the loaves. Then he gave the food to the disciples, and the disciples gave it to the people. Everyone ate and was full, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets of broken pieces that were left over. Over five thousand people were fed that day. (*Matthew 14:14-21*)

**LEADER:** Mindful of the example of Jesus, we pray.  
When we are blessed with abundance,

**ALL:** *Teach us to give freely.*

**LEADER:** When we are surrounded by those in need,

**ALL:** *Teach us to give freely.*

**LEADER:** When we are asked to offer more than we have,

**ALL:** *Teach us to give freely.*