

FIRST COMMUNION AT-HOME FAMILY RETREAT

Introduction

Welcome to the At-Home Family First Communion Retreat Experience. While we never want a child to miss the opportunity to experience God's love and learn more about Holy Communion in the fun and excitement of a large group on retreat day, unfortunately this year it was impossible due to the global coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, we offer this adaptation of the retreat to send home for you to complete as a family.

There are three main parts to this experience: Learning, Prayer Experiences, and Banner. These parts mirror the experience of the retreat.

Presumptions

The successful completion of this at-home retreat experience depends on the following:

- Receiving the Banner Kit which includes a print copy of this packet
- Access to high-speed internet to stream online videos (if this requirement proves difficult, feel free to contact Mr. H. who will be happy to make arrangements for you to use parish internet)
- At least 3 hours to complete everything (while it would be most effective in one three-hour period, if you need to break it up, we'd recommend doing so according to the parts: spend an hour on Learnings, an hour on Prayer Experiences, and then do the banner)

Instructions

Follow these steps for a successful and meaningful family experience:

1. The parent(s) must take time to prepare before the time you set aside for the retreat itself. Read through everything; make sure you understand what you're doing, when, and how.
2. Schedule a time when the whole family can be together for this experience.
3. Before the scheduled time, gather your supplies, prepare your online video windows, and review what you'll be doing.

Deadline

We ask that the At Home Retreat be completed no later than Monday, April 19, 2021. Any family who has not completed the Retreat (by submitting the online Family Reflection, instructions below) by the deadline will be contacted about a delay to their children's reception of the Sacrament. Thank you.

Learning Part One: THE WEIGHT OF A MASS

Introduction

This lovely story sets the context for the day, reminding us that the Mass, at which we receive Holy Communion, is extremely valuable, important, and powerful.

Play the Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICDdm-NqtoQ&t=551s>

Or search YouTube for "ANIMATION – The Weight of a Mass: A Tale of Faith" by Saint Joseph Radio

After viewing the video...

Discuss the Video

Adult(s) Ask the Questions, Encourage the Kids to Answer

Where does this story take place?

(Village Bakery)

Who are the main characters?

(old widow, the baker, the baker's son, the townspeople)

What's happening in the village the very day the story takes place?

(a royal wedding)

What happens that sets up the rest of the story?

(the widow begs for bread)

What's the baker's response?

(mockery and eventually the slip of paper)

What happens when he adds his goods to the scale?

(the paper remains heavier)

Does he give up and give the widow her bread?

(no, he switches the scales around and reloads the goods before putting the slip on)

And so how does the story end?

(everyone goes to Mass and the widow takes but a slice of bread)

Why does the widow say she's ashamed at the end of the story?

(because even she underestimated the weight of the mass by only asking for a crust of bread in exchange)

So what's the lesson of this story?

(the Mass is important, the Mass is valuable, the Mass is powerful)

The rest of today will be about exploring how and why the Mass is important, valuable, and powerful: because it's the Eucharist that makes the Mass these things, the very Communion you're preparing to receive for the first time.

Learning Part Two: LOAVES AND FISHES PRAYER SERVICE

Introduction

In this prayer service, we encourage you to involve your child(ren) in the reading of the script.

Scripture Script

Narrator: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus got the news that his cousin John the Baptist had been killed, he slipped away by boat to an out-of-the-way place by himself. But unsuccessfully—someone saw him and the word got around. Soon a lot of people from the nearby villages walked around the lake to where he was. When he saw them coming, he was overcome with pity and taught them and healed their sick.

Toward evening the disciples approached him.

Reader 1: We're out in the country and it's getting late. Dismiss the people so they can go to the villages and get some supper.

Narrator: But Jesus said,

Jesus: There is no need to dismiss them. You give them supper.

Reader 2: All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish.

Narrator: Jesus said,

Jesus: Bring them here.

Narrator: Then he had the people sit on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread to the disciples. The disciples then gave the food to the congregation.

They all ate their fill. They gathered twelve baskets of leftovers. About five thousand were fed.

The Gospel of the Lord

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Play the Song Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP6Z_OpZqls

Or search YouTube for "Five Loaves and Two Fishes – Corrinne May (Illustrated)" uploaded by Seven Jap

Process the Song Video

How was the song different than the scripture?

(the boy)

What does the boy offer Jesus?

(his lunch from his lunchbox)

What does it mean to offer Jesus your fears, inhibitions, ambitions, etc.?

(in our close friendship with Jesus, we can share with him whatever scares us, holds us back, etc. and know that he receives them with love, offering to help us through whenever we struggle)

What does Jesus do with what we offer him?

(when we offer him our small efforts, he multiplies them, strengthens them; when we offer him our fears or struggles he makes them better, helping us through them)

Prayer Response

Have a conversation in which everyone present offers two or three small gifts to Jesus by completing the sentence:

“Jesus, I offer you the small gift of my...”

End by praying the Our Father.

Learning Part Three: RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST

Play the Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGkTdv4Dt4>

Or search YouTube for "Sacraments 101: Eucharist (how we receive)" uploaded by bustedhalovideo

Discuss the Video WHILE IT IS PLAYING!

- How to Receive: Two Options: tongue or hand
- NOT taking, snatching or biting - RECEIVING
- theologically: we make ourselves open and receptive

PAUSE THE VIDEO TO DISCUSS: ask about the above points to make sure of understanding

PLEASE NOTE: while the video describes the two options usually available (in hand or on tongue) for the children's First Holy Communion we are asking all the candidates to receive in their hand – ALSO, for First Holy Communion the Blood of Christ will not be offered; reception of the Blood of Christ will be at the family's discretion for future Masses whenever it is offered again

- throne: one hand under the other
 - the hand on the bottom should be your dominant hand (the hand you write with)
 - after saying "Amen" you will use that hand on the bottom to pick up the host and bring it to your mouth immediately
- reverence needed: Real Presence
- Simple Bow of the Head
 - NOT a full body, curtsy, perfunctory, or too close
 - next in line

PAUSE TO PROCESS: ask about the above points to make sure of understanding

- practical considerations
 - hands not next to each other, no stuff in hands, hands not dirty
 - open mouth and stick out tongue

PAUSE TO PROCESS: ask about the above points to make sure of understanding

- Communion Rite is a Dialogue of Prayer: words are exchanged, simple but important
 - Amen! - yes, indeed, truly
- 3 meanings:
 - yes we believe it to be Body of Christ, and
 - yes I am a member of the Body of Christ, AND
 - yes I'm going to take the Body of Christ out to the world
- when we're not perfect, God's grace makes up for it - do just do your best

DISCUSS THE AMEN!

The Prayer Experiences Part One: THE PRAYER PROCESS

Introduction

This Prayer Experience is a repeat of one the children received during their preparation for First Reconciliation. We watch the video as a reminder and example of what the prayer is like. As you begin this experience explain that you're going to watch the video as a reminder and an example without actually praying it with Ben and Sarah (the characters) just listening carefully to what they do.

Play the Video

Visit the webpage: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed/program-view/first-reconciliation/session-6>

- Then scroll down to the section of the page entitled Session Videos.
- Click on "3. The Prayer Process" to load that video (it will show the words, "Now Playing" over the tile).
- Scroll back up and in the viewer, you should see 3. The Prayer Process ready to play.
- Click the play button in the lower left corner of the video window. (If you'd like, you can then use the  button to go full screen. After the video is done you can exit full screen by pressing the Esc key.)

Discuss the Video

Ask if your child has any questions. Discuss the process. Remind and encourage that the prayer form is meant to involve both conversation with God (actually talking with God) and listening to God (times of quiet).

Pray the Prayer

Use the image to the right to lead the prayer experience. Read the step and pause for a minute or two, let the Spirit move you, before introducing the next step.

My Little Prayer Process

- 1 Thank God for whomever and whatever you are most grateful today.
- 2 Think about yesterday. Talk to God about the times when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself.
- 3 What do you think God is trying to say to you today? Talk to him about that.
- 4 Ask God to forgive you for anything you have done wrong and to fill your heart with peace.
- 5 Talk to God about some way he is inviting you to change and grow.
- 6 Pray for the other people in your life by asking God to guide them and watch over them.
- 7 Pray the Our Father.

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The Prayer Experiences Part Two: THE ROSARY

Introduction

This prayer experience is perhaps the most familiar to Catholics other than Mass. While some of you might be quite practiced at this devotion, others might not be as familiar. Regardless, we invite you to visit the following website (from the same publisher as our Blessed curriculum, Dynamic Catholic):

<https://dynamiccatholic.com/5-million-rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary/>

Feel free to explore this webpage together with your candidate and use it while you pray. If you're looking for something you could print so that everyone could have a copy to hold on their own, visit this webpage:

<https://www.osv.com/Portals/4/documents/pdf/howtorosary.pdf>

Once you have done some review of how it works, pray some rosary together!

Pray the Prayer

Decide how much of the rosary you are going to pray based on your experience and comfort level with this devotion. In other words, if you are brand new to the rosary and the basic prayers used are not completely familiar, take it slow and pray one decade together. If your family is comfortable with the basic prayers (the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be), then try multiple decades or the whole rosary. And if your family has prayed decades of the rosary together before, perhaps try adding in meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary while praying the decades. The prayer is flexible and every level is valuable and time well spent.

To complete this part of the at home retreat spend at least 20 minutes working with the rosary, both learning about and praying. At least one full decade prayed well is required to consider this experience complete.

The Prayer Experiences Part Three: LECTIO DIVINA

Introduction

Lectio Divina (pronounced "lex-ee-oh duh-vee-nah") is an ancient prayer form of praying with the Bible that through its very structure forces us to slow down and take time with Scripture.

Before beginning this prayer, you will need to choose a Scripture Passage with which to pray. If you don't have a favorite or nothing comes to mind, feel free to use John 6:32-35 from what's called the 'Bread of Life Discourse.'

Pray the Prayer

Follow the directions on the card below and do so literally. Where it says, "One Word or Phrase Shared," do exactly that, simply call out one word or phrase that stuck with you or meant something to you, etc. No need to elaborate or explain in the prayer. Likewise, when it says "One Sentence Prayer," only offer a prayer that is one sentence. Boil it down and be brief so everyone can share and the prayer can flow.

A SIMPLE COMMUNAL LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina ('Divine Word' or 'Divine Reading') provides you the chance to take time to enter conversation with God's Living Word, to enter a rhythm of listening and responding. Here's how today's will work:

- 1.PASSAGE READ
- 2.SILENCE
- 3.PASSAGE READ
- 4.ONE WORD OR PHRASE SHARED
- 5.PASSAGE READ
- 6.ONE SENTENCE PRAYER SHARED:
"I HEAR GOD SAYING TO ME..."
- 7.PASSAGE READ
- 8.SILENCE

When the prayer calls for one word or phrase shared, you literally only offer the one word or phrase that most stuck with you as you listened to the passage, without explanation or elaboration. In these words we listen to the Spirit moving among us. In the prayer, please complete the sentence provided, again without anything more.

The Banner: A FAMILY PROJECT

Introduction

As you know, the banner will mark your assigned pew at the First Holy Communion Mass. Everyone was provided with the same banner kit. We do not require you to use it. If you have another banner (a family one from the past or you preferred to create it yourself) please return the provided banner kit.

Deadline

Due to the extraordinary public health circumstances of this year, we're simply asking that all banners be brought with you to your child's First Holy Communion Mass. More information about those Masses will be provided separately.

Conclusion: A FAMILY REFLECTION

Introduction

To demonstrate successful completion of this at home retreat and thereby avoid delay of the reception of the Sacrament, we ask that every family complete the reflection offered in the Digital Turn In which can be found on the F3 Home Sessions webpage at <https://www.standrewrcc.org/f3homesessions>.

You can find the Retreat Turn In next to your crew's name labeled "FHC Retreat." Be sure to provide answers more extensive than one short sentence. We're asking for you to take a little time and share with us what these experiences might have meant to you. Finally: make certain that you click Submit at the bottom of the reflection and that it loads a page that states "Your submission was successfully submitted." That ensures that we receive your retreat reflection and mark your retreat complete in our records.

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