

*Preparing
for the Sacrament of the
First Holy Communion*



Church of Epiphany

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We hope this handbook will serve you well in preparing your child for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist—the great gift of Christ Himself in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Your child learns best by witnessing your own faith in the Real Presence of the Lord. Our parish is pleased to assist you in bringing your child to this sacramental encounter. In this booklet is information that will be helpful in this process. Please take time to review the material and to mark your calendars for the events that have been planned. Our priest, catechists, and staff are always willing to help you. Do not hesitate to call on us with any questions or concerns.

God Bless you!

*Fr. Mike Santangelo
Pastor*

*Kim Lorentzen
Director of Religious Education*

Our Parish Celebration of FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is a lifelong and ongoing sacrament, a sign of unity and community.

Through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Catholics remember the past, celebrate the present, and place their hope in the future. Eucharist is a sacrifice. The Christian family gathers at Mass to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. At Mass we proclaim, “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.”

The First Eucharist was celebrated by Jesus at the Last Supper. While sharing the Passover supper with his apostles, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. He told them to take the bread and eat it for “this is my Body”. He did the same with the cup of wine, blessing it and sharing it, telling them “This is my blood”.

It was at the Last Supper that Jesus celebrated the first Mass. That night, the apostles received their First Holy Communion. Jesus also gave them the power to change bread and wine into his Body and Blood; a practice done each week by the priest at Mass.



MASS ATTENDANCE: All students are expected to attend Mass regularly. This is especially true of students who seek sacraments from the Church. It is the parent's responsibility to foster a relationship between their child and God's Church, fulfilling the promises made at the child's baptism. Please note that there are fourteen (14) required masses including three (3) mandatory class Masses, Christmas Mass, Easter Mass, as well as a minimum of nine (9) additional masses your child is to attend within the school year. A stamped reflection of the Homily is required for each attended Mass.

FIRST PENANCE: First Penance will take place in November prior to Thanksgiving on a Tuesday at 5:30 PM in the Church.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION: First Holy Communion takes place at 11:00 a.m. Mass on a Saturday each May. The schedule for First Communion is **handed out at the** beginning of the school year and a parent meeting is held with the religious education director in the beginning of the school year. The details of the Communion ceremony will be discussed at that time and general instructions and information will be given to parents.

PRACTICE: Practice is very important, and we hold one practice for First Communion. We consider this practice to be mandatory as it ensures that children are aware of their responsibilities the day of the ceremony and feel comfortable with what is expected of them.

TICKETS: Each family will be given tickets for First Holy Communion Mass. The number of tickets per family will depend on how many first Communicants we have. Every attendee requires a ticket upon entering the Church so that we are in accordance with the Brick Township Fire Code. First Communicants do not require a ticket.

ARRIVAL: All children are to arrive by 10:30 AM and should go directly to the All Purpose Room and take their assigned place. A Parent should stay with the child in the APR until shortly before the procession begins. All other family members and friends are asked to wait in the Church until Mass begins.

ATTIRE: Girls -White dress, veil or headpiece, white tights or socks, white shoes.
Boys – Dark suit or white suit, White dress shirt, White tie, dress shoes only (no athletic shoes).

ACCESSORIES: Children are not allowed to carry bibles, rosaries, or flowers during the ceremony. Girls should not wear gloves or capes. Parents are asked to hold any religious articles or accessory items for their children until after the ceremony is over.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Photo and videography (this includes cell phones) are not permitted during the Mass. This is to conserve the dignity and reverence of the Mass.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
about the
THE HOLY EUCHARIST
“a Little Catechism”

What is the Holy Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament, a sacrifice, and the abiding presence of Jesus Himself, God, and man. In the Eucharist, Jesus is truly and completely present under the appearance of bread and wine. He is present in his body, blood, soul, and divinity. The word Eucharist is of Greek origin, meaning “thanksgiving.”

When and why did Jesus give us the Holy Eucharist?

Jesus instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, “the night on which He was betrayed,” as He celebrated the Last Supper with His apostles. At the Passover meal, Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to his apostles saying, “This is my Body which will be given up for you.” Then he took the chalice of wine and said, “Take this and drink of this, all of you. This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.” Jesus gave us the Eucharist because He wants to stay close to us until the end of time, to teach us, comfort us, strengthen us, and make us holy.

How is the celebration of the Eucharist carried out?

The Eucharist unfolds in two great parts which together form one, single act of worship which is called the Mass or the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Liturgy of the Word involves proclaiming and listening to the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Eucharist includes the presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer which contain the words of consecration and communion.

What do we mean by “liturgy?”

Liturgy is a Greek word meaning “service.”

What is the consecration of the Mass?

The consecration takes place during the Eucharistic Prayer offered by the priest. During this prayer, the priest calls down the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine. He takes the bread and wine and says the words that Jesus said at the Last Supper, “This is my Body...This is my Blood...”

What is transubstantiation?

This is the term we use to describe the change that takes place at the consecration of the Mass. The substance of the bread and wine change into to the Body and Blood of Christ, while their “accidents” remain the same. (i.e. the bread still looks, feels, and tastes like bread, the wine still looks, and tastes like wine) The Real Presence of the Lord is “veiled” under these accidents.

Why is Jesus called the “Lamb of God?”

Jesus has this title because He was slain like the Old Testament Passover Lamb, and He saved us from the slavery of sin.

Who may make Jesus present in the Eucharist?

Priests are ordained by the bishop and through the celebration of Mass make Jesus present for us. He gives the Eucharist in Holy Communion to the faithful. He may be assisted by a deacon and/or extraordinary minister of the Holy Communion.

How long does the Presence of Jesus remain in the Eucharist?

The Presence of Jesus remains as long as the sacred host and precious blood exist.

What must we do to receive the Eucharist worthily?

A baptized Catholic may receive the Eucharist worthily when:

- They truly believe that Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist;
- They are free from serious sin; and
- They fast before receiving.

What is the “Eucharistic Fast?”

The Church requires a fast of one hour from all food and liquids (with the exception of water and medicine). This fast period is reduced or dispensed for the sick.

How often may one receive the Eucharist?

Provided that one is in the “state of grace” i.e. free of any serious sin, one may receive the Eucharist often, even daily.

How should one receive the Eucharist?

A person should receive the Lord with reverence and love. In the US, one is given the option of receiving “on the tongue” or “in the hand.” After making a bow on approaching the minister of the hosts or of the chalice, one responds “Amen” upon hearing “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.” After consuming the host, one returns to their place in church and should spend some time in prayer.

What are the “fruits” or effects of Holy Communion?

Holy Communion:

- Increases our union with Christ and the Church;
- Strengthens and renews the list of grace received at the Baptism **and** Confirmation;
- Makes us grow in love of our neighbor;
- Strengthens us in charity;
- Wipes away venial sin and preserves us from mortal sin in the future.

Does Jesus remain in the Church after Mass?

The Presence of Jesus remains in the Eucharist even after Mass. The remainder of sacred hosts is placed in the tabernacle.

What is the tabernacle?

It is the “box-like” shrine in which Jesus is kept. This is done so that people may pray in the presence of the Lord and that hosts are available to bring to the sick and homebound.

What is the respect due to the Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle?

Respect is shown by our prayerfulness and love. We should keep silence to allow others to pray. Whenever we pass before the tabernacle or enter or exit our pew, we should genuflect (or bow).

What is a sanctuary lamp?

A light (candle or oil lamp) is kept burning near the tabernacle to indicate the Presence of the Lord.

What is a genuflection?

A genuflection is an act of reverence to the Eucharist by bending the right knee to the floor.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents, as primary educators of their children are responsible for preparing them for the Sacraments of Initiation. They should strive to be models of moral living and forgiveness. With the support of our parish religious education program, parents should prepare their child for this sacrament in the following ways:

- Modeling Catholic life by assisting at Mass every Sunday and Day of Obligation
- Maintaining a regular prayer life at home
- Making a sacramental confession regularly and encouraging their child to do so
- Observe the Eucharistic Fast
- Reviewing the basic prayers and the responses and gestures of the Mass. Practice genuflecting in church upon entering the church and before leaving.
- Attending the meetings and events sponsored by the parish
- Being positive about the obligation to assist at Mass
- Assessing their child understanding of the Eucharistic Presence and the obligation for a worthy reception of Holy Communion. A First Communicant should know the difference between the Body of Christ and ordinary bread. The bread and wine carried to the altar at Mass is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ at the consecration.
- Explaining that whether one receives the host only or the Precious Blood only, one is receiving Jesus himself, whole and entire. Be careful to explain that receiving under one form (host or precious blood) is not receiving only a “part” of Jesus.