

My
Mass
Book

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Parent Guide

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Including the Order of Mass,
Catholic Prayers,
and the Sacraments



a Kendall Hunt Company

Dear Parents and Families,

Helping children to understand and participate in the Mass is one of the most important tasks of Catholic families. It can also be a challenging task. It is our hope that *My Mass Book* and this accompanying guide will help. We pray that, as you guide the child in your life to know and love God, you, too, will more deeply recognize that you are a beloved member of God's family. May the Holy Spirit fill your heart and home with the great love, joy, and peace that flows from our communion with Christ and his Body, the Church.

Yours in Christ,

RCLBenziger

Introduction

The Eucharist is the heart of the Christian life. In the celebration of the Mass, the faithful recognize the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the continuing presence of Christ. The faithful gather to give thanks and praise to God, receiving the gift of the Eucharist, which binds us more closely to Christ and one another. By participating in the Mass with their families, children experience the mystery of the Eucharist; learn to join the community in prayer; and, through reception of the Eucharist, become fully part of the Body of Christ, the Church. This guide is intended to help you as you accompany your child in growing in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharistic celebration.



A Visit to the Church (pages 6-7)

Catholic churches are built in many styles and sizes. Taking the time to become familiar with your church can help your child be more comfortable praying there. Before or after Mass, walk around the church and point out the items included on these pages. Depending on the age and design of your church, the tabernacle may be located in a side chapel. Similarly, the baptismal font may be located in the gathering space or in a side chapel. Be sure also to look at the stained glass, artwork, and statues included in your worship space. These items often portray stories from Scripture or important saints. They also can reveal the faith and culture of the community.

On the Altar During Mass (page 8)

Families often use special dishes when they share special meals. As the family of God, the Eucharist is our special meal. You can help your child understand that, just as a family uses special dishes, our Church family uses special vessels to celebrate the Eucharist. In addition to the items identified on page 8, you may also see:

- **Corporal**—a large, white cloth that is placed on top of the altar cloth. The vessels that hold the Body and Blood of Christ are placed on this special cloth. It is similar to a placemat on our dinner tables, and it collects any spills or crumbs.

- **Ciborium**—a vessel that looks like a chalice but has a lid. A ciborium is often used to hold the remaining Blessed Sacrament that is placed in the tabernacle between Masses. This Eucharist is reserved to be taken to those who are ill, homebound, or dying.

We Celebrate the Mass (pages 10-25)

What is Mass?

The Mass is the main celebration of the Church. The celebration of Mass is a communal act. That means each person gathered has an active role in worshipping God. At Mass, we worship God by listening to God's Word; responding to the greetings and prayers; singing; and celebrating and sharing the Eucharist with God's people, the Body of Christ. Some participants have special roles, such as greeter, cantor, lector, or altar server.



Act of Spiritual Communion

Our obligation to attend Mass on Sunday (or the vigil on Saturday evening) is rooted in the Third Commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day. In circumstances where participation in the liturgy is impossible, due to the lack of a priest or other grave cause such as illness or serious safety risks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the faithful are strongly encouraged to participate in alternative acts of worshiping God (*Code of Canon Law*, Can. 1248.2). This could include participating in a livestreamed Mass or Liturgy of the Word or other prayer as a family.

The devotional practice of offering an Act of Spiritual Communion is also suggested when participating in Mass is not feasible. Saints Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Jesus, and Pope John Paul II, among others, wrote about the benefits of spiritual communion. Because reception of the Eucharist closely unites us to Jesus and others, it is good to express that desire for unity, especially when it is not possible to attain it in the Eucharist.

A popular version of the Act of Spiritual Communion was recommended by Saint Alphonsus Liguori:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you were already there, I embrace you and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit that I should be separated from you. Amen.

Why do the priest and deacon kiss the altar?

The priest and deacon, if present, kiss the altar as a sign of reverence for Jesus Christ and his redeeming, sacrificial act, represented by the altar. The gesture comes from an ancient practice of offering a kiss as a sign of respect or greeting. Kissing the altar honors the important role it has in the Mass and in the Catholic faith. Some altars hold a relic of a saint; kissing the altar also shows recognition and respect to the saint.

What is the "Collect"?

The Collect is a particular prayer that concludes the Introductory Rites at Mass. It begins with the priest's invitation, "Let us pray," by which all those gathered are invited to pray together. The moment of silence allows each person to call to mind his or her intention for the Mass before the priest continues. The priest then prays the words of the Collect, gathering together all the intentions into one. The words of the Collect often set the tone or theme that will be reflected in the readings. The prayer is offered to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in unity with the Holy Spirit.





Why do we trace the sign of the cross on our foreheads, lips, and hearts?

Just before the Gospel is proclaimed, the priest or deacon will say, "A reading from the holy Gospel according to (name of the Gospel writer)." The assembly responds, "Glory to you, O Lord," while making the sign of the cross over our foreheads, lips, and hearts. This gesture recognizes the importance of the Word of God and expresses our desire for the Gospel to be in our thoughts, so as to purify our minds; on our lips, so that our words will be holy; and in our hearts, so that we might come to know and love God more deeply.



What is the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?

Through the action of the Holy Spirit, though remaining under the appearance of bread and wine, the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ. Although this is a mystery, we believe in faith that Jesus Christ is truly present. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist 'the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*'" (CCC 1374). This presence begins at the moment of the consecration, during the Eucharistic Prayer, and continues as long as the Eucharistic species exists. We demonstrate our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ through bowing and genuflecting as a sign of adoration of our Lord.

Saint Thomas Aquinas called the Eucharist our "spiritual food." He said that receiving the Eucharist turns the person who receives Communion into Jesus himself and leads us to becoming more Christ-like. If we receive the Body and Blood with reverence, thankfulness, and a willingness to allow Jesus to work through us, the mystery of the Eucharist continues in us. We are able to become what we have received—Jesus himself—and continue his mission of love in the world.



Liturgical Calendar (pages 26-27)

The liturgical year is the name of the seasons and feasts that make up the Church's year of worship. The main seasons of the Church year are Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The Triduum is the three holy days just before Easter. The rest of the liturgical year is called Ordinary Time.

God's plan of Salvation and Redemption unfolds throughout the liturgical year. The prayers and celebrations draw attention to the presence of Christ and his life, teaching, suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. The liturgical seasons highlight major events from the life of Christ in relation to Salvation. In Lent, for example, the Church remembers Jesus' call to conversion and repentance. Throughout the liturgical year, the Church also celebrates Mary, the Mother of God, and the lives of saints as examples of Christian life.

Just as the natural seasons provide a rhythm to our patterns of living, the liturgical year provides a rhythm of prayer and celebration. Extend this rhythm to your daily living by including the color and other symbols of the liturgical season in your home or prayer space. You also may wish to celebrate the feast days of saints who have particular significance to your family or community.

Catholic Prayers (pages 28-31)

Prayer is talking and listening to God. When we pray, we raise our minds and hearts to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Prayer is the heart of our relationship with God. We can pray alone, as a family, with others, and with the whole Church. Some kinds of prayer use words that we say aloud or quietly in our hearts. Other prayers use our imaginations to bring us closer to God. Silent prayer is simply being with God.

Use the prayers on these pages regularly to pray with your child. Also, pray in your own words and encourage your child to do the same. Developing the habit of pausing to acknowledge and talk to God will deepen your child's awareness that God is always with him or her. You may wish to designate a prayer space within your home. Select a space that is comfortable and accessible to everyone, such as the living room or dining room. Use a small table or shelf. Include a Bible, a cross or crucifix, and a candle in your prayer space. You may wish to add prayer books; Holy Water; and images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints.



The *Angelus* (page 32)

It is believed that the *Angelus* began as a Franciscan practice and has been prayed as it is today since the end of the 16th century. Since then, it is traditionally prayed at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. and is announced by the ringing of church bells. The *Angelus* reminds us of the Incarnation by recalling the Annunciation, or the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would be the Mother of Jesus, and the Blessed Mother's "yes" to God. By remembering Mary's response to the angel's surprising announcement, we become more aware of God's presence and call in our daily lives.

Litany of the Saints (page 34)

The Litany of the Saints is a prayer that celebrates the Church's belief that the saints who are in Heaven intercede with the Father for all on Earth. It is one of the oldest prayers of the Church that continues to be used, and it is included in the Mass for Easter Vigil, All Saints Day, Baptisms, and ordinations. The litany (which means "list") invokes the Holy Trinity and then asks for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, angels, prophets, Apostles, disciples, martyrs, bishops, priests, religious, and laity. When praying the Litany of the Saints with your family, you may wish to include the names of saints and holy people who are significant to your family.

The saints shown on page 34 are, beginning at the top left:

- 1 Saint Peter
- 2 Saint Elizabeth of Hungary
- 3 Saint Maximilian Kolbe
- 4 Saint Josephine Bakhita
- 5 Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta
- 6 Saint Andrew Kim
- 7 Saint Nicholas of Myra
- 8 Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton
- 9 Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
- 10 Saint Joseph holding Baby Jesus
- 11 Saint Juan Diego

Visit www.SaintsResource.com to learn more about these and other saints of the Church.



The Rosary (pages 38-39)

Catholics pray the Rosary to honor Mary and remember the important events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. The twenty mysteries of the Rosary summarize Mary's role in God's plan of Salvation as related to the mysteries of the life of Christ.

The Seven Sacraments (pages 42-44)

The Sacraments are the seven signs of God's love for us that Jesus gave the Church. We share in God's love when we celebrate the Sacraments. In the Sacraments, we receive grace. The word *grace* means "gift." God's grace is both the gift of his sharing his life and love with us and his help to live as disciples. The more we come to know God, the more we want to spend time with him in prayer and the more we want others to know that we are disciples.

Saint Augustine once described Sacraments as an outward sign of inward grace. "The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament" (CCC 1131). This is a difficult concept for children to comprehend. Help your child to be mindful of both the visible and invisible dimensions of the Sacrament he or she is receiving by recalling actions that reveal a deeper reality. For example, you give family members hugs (visible) to communicate your love and concern for them (invisible). When we receive a Sacrament, God is also communicating his love for us.

Penance and Reconciliation (page 45)

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation heals the divisions sin creates between the sinner and God, and between the sinner and others. The Sacrament brings God's forgiveness into the life of sinners, and reconciles sinners with God and the Church.

Some children may be more nervous than others and may have a difficult time confessing their sins to the priest. It can be difficult to name what we have done wrong! You may wish to point out that even adults feel this way sometimes. Assure your child that the priest will help him or her. You may also wish to help your child feel comfortable by practicing the ritual for the Sacrament. You can take turns being the priest hearing the confession and the person confessing his or her sins.



Examination of Conscience (page 46)

A well-formed conscience enables us to responsibly exercise the free will we have been given by God. How do we form our consciences? We must attend carefully to the teachings of Christ and the Church, which guide us in interpreting the Gospel, the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes. We find strength to form our consciences through our participation in the Sacraments, through prayer, and in our solidarity with other believers. When our consciences are properly formed and we are in the habit of listening carefully to the Holy Spirit, we are better prepared to make sound moral decisions.

Conscience formation does not happen automatically. Some children have difficulty understanding the difference between a mistake, an accident, and a deliberate choice to do something they know is wrong or not do something they know is right.

Sin is freely choosing to do or say something that we know God does not want us to do or say. It is also a sin to choose to not do or say something that we know God wants us to do or say.

A mistake is when we do or say something, but we do not know it is wrong. For example, we may take a pen or pencil because we do not realize it is not ours. This is not a sin.

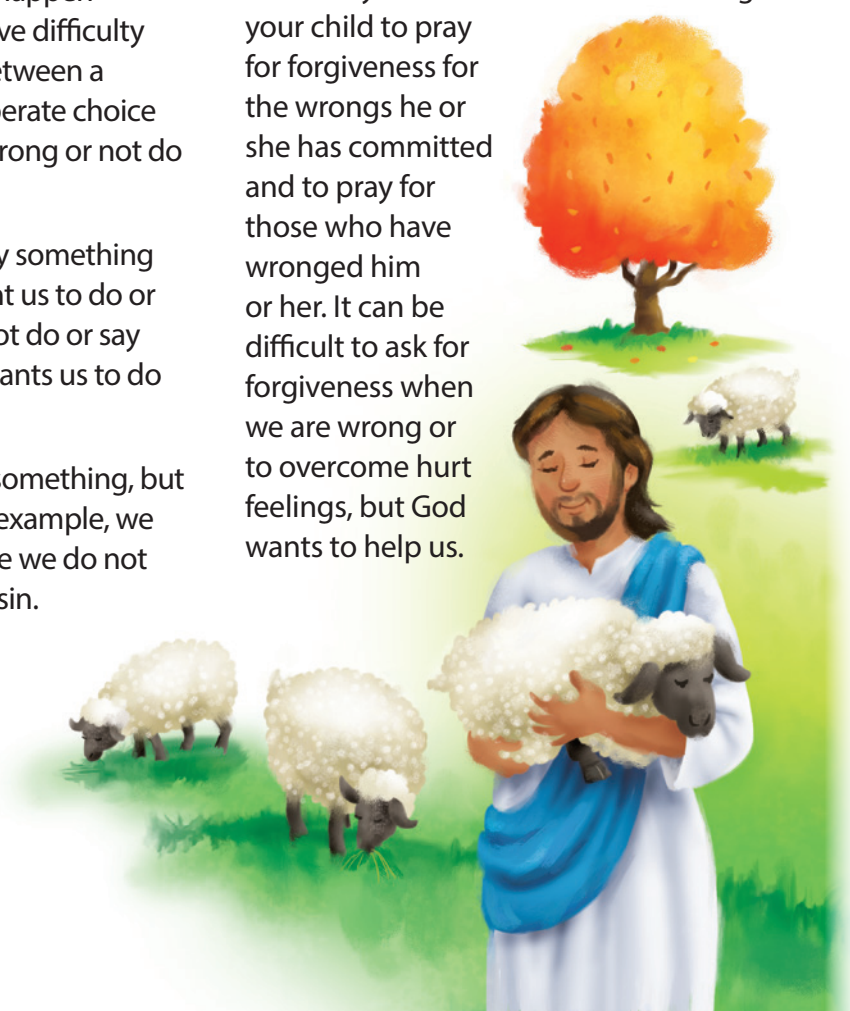
An accident is when we know something is wrong, but we do it without intention. For example, we may bump into a sibling coming out of the bathroom, knocking him or her to the ground. This is not a sin.

You can help your child better understand the difference between sin, mistake, and accident by making an examination of conscience part of your family's dinner or bedtime routines.

Act of Contrition (page 47)

In the Act of Contrition, we tell God that we are sorry for our sins, we ask for forgiveness, and we tell God we will try our best not to sin again.

Forgiveness is a Spiritual Work of Mercy, but it does not always come easily for many of us. When we act with forgiveness, we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. We are also extending to others the mercy God extends to us. Encourage your child to pray for forgiveness for the wrongs he or she has committed and to pray for those who have wronged him or her. It can be difficult to ask for forgiveness when we are wrong or to overcome hurt feelings, but God wants to help us.



A Prayer to Follow Jesus (page 48)

Each person is created by God. God wants each person to live in friendship with him on Earth and forever in Heaven. God fully revealed his desire for all people to know and love him by sending his Son, Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus' life, suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension that each person is saved from sin and death. By following the example of Jesus, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and growing in holiness, each person comes to know and love God more deeply. By following Jesus, we express what we celebrate at Mass, proclaiming the Good News with our lives.

Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

Roman Missal

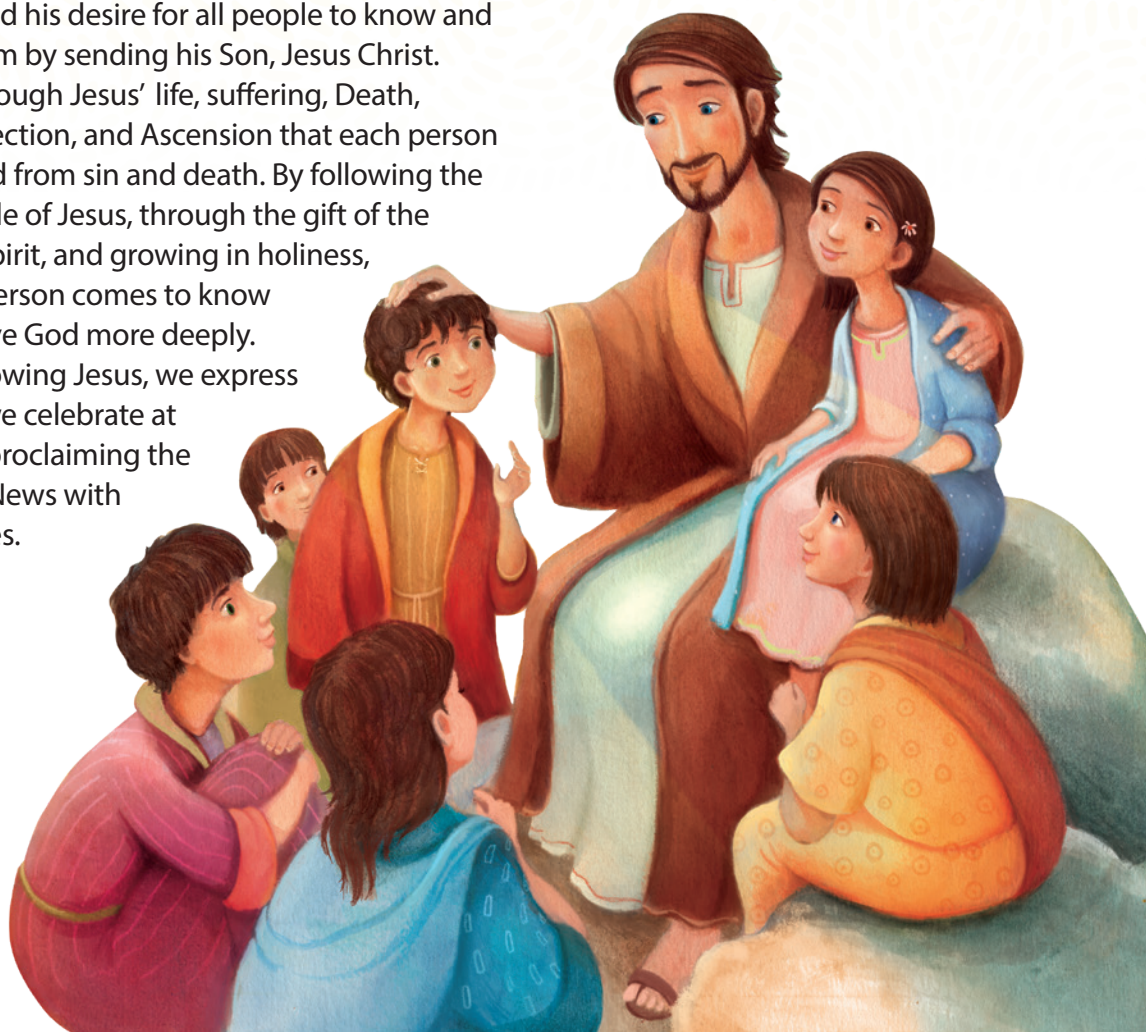


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