



## ASCENSION RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Fall, 2009

Dear Eucharist Preparation Families,

The people of Ascension welcome you and your child as you prepare for the reception of First Eucharist this year. This is a grace-filled time for you and for the Ascension community. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with your family during this time of preparation and we pledge our support.

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the entire Christian life” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n.11). The Eucharist is also the culmination of the Sacraments of Initiation. Preparation for the Eucharist is, first, the primary privilege and responsibility of the parents, and then of the Community. Children are generally prepared for their participation in the Eucharist around the age of seven. The program used by Ascension Parish is based on Christiane Brusselman’s *We Celebrate the Eucharist*. The program centers on the family, parish and worshipping community. It recognizes that “the initiation of children takes place step-by-step in the community of the faithful.” It also acknowledges that parents have a special role in the process of their children’s initiation.

Preparation for First Eucharist includes five sessions during the year involving both parents and children. The Church strongly encourages adult education and formation. Parent meetings during years of sacramental preparation offer an excellent opportunity for adults to renew their own understanding of the sacrament. Through prayer, conversation, reflection, and sharing ideas, adults increase and broaden their knowledge and deepen their appreciation of the meaning of Eucharist. Fr. McNally strongly recommends that parents preparing their first child for Eucharist attend the parent meeting and all other meetings with their children.

Parents and children work together--at home and at the evening sessions--to come to a deeper understanding of each of the nine themes presented in the program. Each theme offers a different perspective on the meaning of the Eucharist. As a whole they give a very broad understanding of this sacrament.

The parish preparation for Eucharist begins in October. The celebration of First Eucharist takes place on the first two weekends in May. Parents may choose one of the four Masses at which they will celebrate their child’s reception of First Eucharist. Children and families sit together in a reserved pew which is randomly assigned. Each reserved pew holds between 6-9 people. Extended family who attend the Mass are invited to arrive early and find seating in the non-reserved section of the church.

### First Eucharist Preparation Sessions

- September 29, 2009**    **Parent Only meeting (all parents)**    **7:00 PM**    **Dominican Univ.**  
**Gertrud Mueller Nelson**  
This first meeting for parents is usually held at Ascension. This year, because of the high quality of the speaker and partnering of local parishes with Dominican University, it will take place at Dominican. Gertrud Mueller Nelson, artist, author, teacher and woman of faith, delivers a talk entitled, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Imagination and the Discovery of Grace*. God knew we could learn about God best through what we see and touch and feel and hear and taste. That's why God sent us Jesus—in a body like our own. Living among us, Jesus taught us by telling stories of tangible things and human situations. He knew that it takes our human imagination to recognize and respond to God's presence in the world. This imagination is basic to our sacramental life: it gives us back the holiness of our human condition. Nelson is the author of *Child of God, A Walk Through Our Church, To Dance With God* and other books that celebrate the holy in the ordinary.
- October 5, 2009**    **Parent meeting**    **7:30-9:00 PM**    **Pine Room**  
**(First Time Parents Only)**  
Only parents who have never worked with the Gold Book for First Eucharist preparation need attend this meeting. During this session, parents receive information about the Eucharist preparation program and suggestions for how to work with their children in the home setting. It is also an opportunity for parents to discuss their own understanding of the Eucharist and to receive some updating regarding the theology of the sacrament.
- October 19, 2009**    **Enrollment ceremony**    **7-8 PM**    **Church**  
**(Parents and children)**  
At this service the children are presented with a copy of We Celebrate the Eucharist. The children sign their names on an enrollment banner and the community of parents and children pray together at the beginning of this special year of preparation.
- January 11, 2010**    **Prayer Service**    **7-8 PM**    **Church**  
**(Parent and child)**  
This session provides an opportunity for the children to explore some of the objects used during Mass. Through presentations on the signs and gestures of the Liturgy the children are invited to enter into the great mysteries of our faith. Parents can use what they learn at this session to help their children focus more specifically on various parts of the Mass.
- March 22, 2010**    **Peace Service**    **7-8 PM**    **Church**  
**(Parent and child)**  
This session focuses on the theme of Reconciliation. The children and parents have an opportunity to reflect on God's love and mercy, pray together during an examination of conscience and, if they choose, they may speak with a priest in individual reconciliation. Together we thank God for the gift of forgiveness and ask God's help in forgiving others.

<b>April 24, 2010</b>	<b>Bread Baking Day Prayer Service (Parent Volunteers and children in Pine Room) (Parents and children in Church)</b>	<b>8:30-10:30 AM 10:30-11 AM</b>	<b>Pine Room Church</b>
<b>May 1, 2009</b>	<b>Celebration of First Eucharist</b>	<b>11:00 AM Mass</b>	
<b>May 2, 2009</b>	<b>Celebration of First Eucharist</b>	<b>11:00 AM Mass</b>	
<b>May 8, 2009</b>	<b>Celebration of First Eucharist</b>	<b>5:00 PM Mass</b>	
<b>May 9, 2009</b>	<b>Celebration of First Eucharist</b>	<b>11:00 AM Mass</b>	

Our prayer for families preparing their first child for Eucharist is one of peace and joy as together you approach the Table of the Lord. For those families who have gone through the program before, we pray that the uniqueness and beauty of each child in your family brings you new insights into the Eucharist. May all of you be drawn ever closer to Christ who is the Bread of Life.

God bless your family as you begin this year of preparation. May each meal you share with your family be a foretaste of the Eucharistic meal that you will celebrate with the Ascension family for the first time in the spring.

Sincerely,

Christine Ondrla, DRE