



Received

Your Journey to First Communion

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

Parish Session Guide



ASCENSION

West Chester, Pennsylvania

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This *Received Family Faith Formation* Parish Session Guide is intended for use with the second edition of the *Received: Your Journey to First Reconciliation* Student Workbook and Leader's Guide.

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**Blessed be God,
Blessed be his holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be his most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.**

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Letter to Directors

Welcome to Ascension’s catechetical manual for directors and catechists of family faith formation, which you will use in helping parents teach their children lessons about first Communion. Thank you for accepting this vital leadership role in *Received: Your Journey to First Communion*, the second part of Ascension’s family faith formation program. These next four parish sessions are designed to prepare parents to teach their children Ascension’s first Communion lessons at home. A parish catechist—whom you may need to appoint—will get the children ready for their at-home lessons at the same time.

If you led the *Renewed: Your Journey to First Reconciliation* Parish Sessions, thank you very much. Your continued invaluable commitment to facilitating another four sessions in four months will help you steer the parents-as-teachers on the right path. By supporting these moms and dads and their children during this project, you are strengthening our domestic Church as you nurture the Catholic Faith of entire families. Indeed, it is a holy mission.

As we recommend in the *Renewed* program, we encourage you and the catechist to become fully familiar with the material you will be conveying by reviewing the content in this manual—including the videos—and having supplies on hand.

Some parents may brim with confidence about teaching *Received* while others may be nervous. You will direct both types of parents—and everyone in between. Remind parents—especially any newcomers—that they have already been their child’s first catechist before their child began faith formation, so their ability to pass on the Faith will flow naturally.

Received Family Faith Formation is flexible. Adapt it to accommodate parents’ needs and ensure that they understand the essential teachings. Your versatility, experience, and insight will help you find just the right balance.

You have all you need: an open heart, a love for God, a joyful witness to his endless mercy and grace, and a program designed for you, the parents, and their children.

As you journey on with your families, we are praying for all of you!

In Christ,

Your Friends at Ascension

Received Family Faith Formation Program Overview

Received: Your Journey to First Communion, second edition, is a twelve-lesson sacramental preparation program for elementary school children. It prepares children to encounter God's love in the Sacrament of Holy Communion by setting the sacrament in the context of salvation history—God's love for us and his desire for us to know him and love him in return.

The original *Received* program is used widely in parishes and schools. *Received Family Faith Formation* has adapted the original program to give parents the tools they need to teach *Received* to their children at home. When they teach *Received*, the parents will use the *Received Family Faith Formation At-Home Lesson Guide* along with the *Received Student Workbook, Second Edition*, and the videos.

Typically, *Received* parish sessions begin soon after the *Renewed* first Confession program has ended. Using this Parish Session Guide and the *Received Leader's Guide*, you and the catechists will introduce the lessons to the families at each monthly session and prepare the parents to teach the lessons at home.

The structure of your upcoming *Received* sessions with parents and children is similar to those in *Renewed*. You will have four meetings covering six units. If last year's sessions ended in December, it is best that this year's meetings take place early in January, February, March, and April. You may wish to think of the next four months as the second semester. However, the program is flexible. You may adjust the schedule to best serve your parish community's needs.

Like *Renewed*, the *Received Family Faith Formation* program has been designed for you as the director and for your catechists as well as for the parents and children. Your leadership role extends beyond preparing families for their child's first Communion. You will be inviting parents and children to meet Jesus Christ in his Word and in the sacrament, ultimately leading to a conversion of heart. You're guiding parents as they teach their children to respond in faith to the voice of God who "first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The ultimate goal? Forming children into young disciples.

Let's get ready!

Components of the Program

Director and Catechist Resources and Supplies

- *Received Family Faith Formation* Parish Session Guide
- *Received: Your Journey to First Communion* Leader's Guide, Second Edition, with online leader access
- Paper, pens, pencils, and markers or crayons
- Laptop, an internet connection, and a monitor to display online videos

Children's Material

- *Received: Your Journey to First Communion* Student Workbook, Second Edition, with online course access

Parents' Material

- *Received Family Faith Formation* At-Home Lesson Guide

Additional Resources

The *Received* program provides additional resources to support your role as a director, such as prayer cards and *Receiving Jesus: My Guide to the Mass*, a keepsake book that the children can use in preparation for their first Holy Communion. The program also offers online support for parents through the *Received* Online Parent Certification on Thinkific, which you can refer to as you guide them through their teaching journey.

About the Parish Session Guide

The parish sessions are once-a-month gatherings for all the participants in the family faith formation program. Two meetings take place during each parish session: one, led by the director, is for the parents; the other, which is held at the same time, is led by a catechist for the children.

The *Received Family Faith Formation* Parish Session Guide is the manual for you and a catechist to use in these preparatory sessions with the parents and children. It supplements the Leader's Guide, which has the necessary information to run the program in a classroom. You will refer to the Leader's Guide for lesson-specific content and use the Parish Session Guide to provide the parents with the support they need to teach the program at home. The parents will be the primary catechists of their children.

You will help instill confidence in the parent-teachers, while the children—working with a catechist—will learn the vocabulary and experience the content in a way that will facilitate their catechetical lessons with Mom or Dad.

Suggested Session Calendar

Ideally, these preparatory sessions for the parents and their children will occur early in each month so parents can teach the units' lessons during the rest of the month. It is important that everyone stays on schedule.

January

Unit 1: What Is the Paschal Mystery?

February

Unit 2: Who Gave Us the Eucharist?

Unit 3: Why Is the Eucharist Important?

March

Unit 4: What Is the Mass?

Unit 5: How Will I Receive Jesus and Stay Close to Him?

April

Unit 6: How Do We Live Out Our Eucharistic Mission?

First Communion Retreat

This should take place shortly after the parents and children finish Unit 6 and before the children receive their first Communion. You may consider scheduling the First Communion Retreat in late April or early May.

Parish Session Format

Director and Parents' Session (1 hour and 15 minutes)

Gathering and Welcome (7 minutes)

- Volunteers welcome the participants to the meeting.
- Parents sign in and sit at a table.
- Opening prayer is provided (or you may use prayers of your own).

Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis (13 minutes)

- Discussion with parents and director, including a review of the previous units during sessions 2, 3, and 4.
- For large groups, consider dividing into smaller discussion groups or tables.
- Assign a small group leader to each table. (This can be done prior to the session.)

Part 2—Overview of Units, Videos, and Discussion (40 minutes)

- Introduce lesson objectives.
- Present supporting videos and explain key concepts.
- Guide discussion to deepen understanding.
- Wrap up discussion: Address questions, clarify key concepts, direct, and encourage.

Part 3—Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

- Children rejoin parents after their session with a catechist.
- Families sit together and share what they have learned.
- Director guides the discussion using the conversation prompts in this manual.
- Closing prayer is provided (or you may use or add prayers of your own).

Catechist and Children's Session (1 hour and 15 minutes)

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- Children meet with the catechist.
- They begin with focused prayer time and say the Our Father.
- These few minutes set the tone for the session.

Independent Activities (15 minutes)

- These activities settle the children and introduce themes and vocabulary that they will explore more fully with their parents at home.
- Children work alone, with a partner, or with the catechist and assistants.

Interactive Activities (40 minutes)

- One or two activities selected from those detailed in this manual, as time allows
- Guided, hands-on activities with the catechist and assistants, if available
- Group participation opportunities
- Reinforcement of lesson concepts

Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

- Children join the Director and Parents' Session for closing activities and prayer

Advance Preparation

October

Use your parish bulletin, email blasts, or another form of communication to invite parents of eligible children to register for *Received*. Briefly describe the program, who to contact for information, and how to register. Ask your priest whether you should invite families who did not complete the *Renewed* program.

November

Because December is a busy month for families, we suggest doing the following in early November:

- Recruit volunteer small group leaders for *Received*. Suggestions:
 - » You may use the same leaders from *Renewed* or seek new ones. If you want to have new small group leaders, email or mail out a sign-up sheet in early November. You may need to make phone calls. A follow-up reminder in December will be important.
 - » Consider appointing volunteers who attend Mass regularly and know other parents in the parish.
 - » Explain to leaders that their role only requires a bit of positive commitment and a willingness to lead small groups.
 - » If recruitment does not yield small group leaders, groups can decide among themselves during the sessions who will take on this role.
- Recruit a volunteer or two to welcome participants each month, as described in this manual.
- Depending on the number of children, you may consider recruiting some volunteer assistant catechists to help with the Catechist and Children's Sessions.
- Print out the list of "Gathering and Welcome" instructions and the monthly prompts for "Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis," included in each session, so you can hand them to the small group leaders at the sessions.
- Make sure the meeting rooms have enough tables and chairs, including extra chairs in the parents' room for the children when they join at the end of each session. This is also a good time to plan for refreshments and supplies (see page 7). Feel free to decorate the rooms to create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. The catechist should make sure that the children's meeting room, the church, and all locations to be used for activities are accessible to all the children.

JANUARY PARISH SESSION

The Director and Parents' Session takes place at the same time as the Catechist and Children's Session. These sessions cover the following lessons:

Unit 1: What Is the Paschal Mystery?

Lesson 1.1: The Paschal Mystery in Jesus' Life

Lesson 1.2: The Paschal Mystery Today

January Director and Parents' Session

Gathering and Welcome (7 minutes)

Volunteers greet and welcome participants, provide direction, and facilitate an inviting check-in process. If your situation allows, provide a sign-in sheet, name tags, coffee, and snacks at the sign-in table. Children go with a catechist to their meeting room.

Each table should have a small group leader and, at most, eight parents. If you were unable to assign leaders, let the groups decide among themselves who will lead. Then, hand each small group leader this list of instructions:

- Welcome newcomers and catch up with parents who were in the *Renewed* sessions.
- Facilitate discussion.
- Gather and distribute any required materials.
- Serve as a point person for answering questions.

After everyone is checked in and settled, you and, hopefully, your priest may welcome parents to this first session. Tell them about breaks, refreshments, and restroom locations. This will orient the parents and help them feel welcome. Explain that everyone will participate as a large group at the beginning of the opening session. But for the rest of the session, they will discuss material together with their small group—that is, the other parents at their table.

Begin this session—and the next three sessions—with a prayer:

God our Father,

Your love is the source of family life, and every family is called to reflect your glory. We come before you today and seek to grow in faith, hope, and love as families in our parish. Give us wisdom and joy as we grow in our Faith and hand on the story of your love to our children. Bless our conversation today, and remain with us when we go home. Help us to take with us what we have learned and discussed and use it to bring our families closer to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis (13 minutes, large group)

Introductions (6 minutes)

For this initial session, complete Part 1 as a large group.

Ask newcomers to tell the group a bit about their family, and then ask the returning parents to briefly introduce themselves.

To gauge parents' expectations, ask these questions:

- What are you most looking forward to during family faith formation this year?
- What do you anticipate will be your biggest challenge in family faith formation this year?

Discussion (7 minutes)

Begin by reflecting on the home experiences of family faith formation during the *Renewed* program. Everyone benefits when participants ask questions and share highlights, successes, and challenges.

The following three prompts are similar to those that will be used in small groups in future sessions. Their repetition will help establish a rhythm and pattern of sharing from month to month.

- Ask each parent to share one faith highlight or success from the just-completed *Renewed* lessons. It might relate to the lessons, or it could pertain to prayer, experiences at Mass, or perhaps discussions about the Catholic Faith.
- Next, ask each parent to share what aspect of family faith formation he or she is finding the most difficult. Praying together? Going to Mass? Ask them to name something about living out the Faith that's hard for their family.
- Finally, ask parents to state a goal or goals they want to achieve this month to improve their family's faith life.

Part 2—Unit 1 Overview, Videos, and Discussion (40 minutes, small groups)

Unit 1 focuses on the Paschal Mystery (Jesus' Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension), which saves us from sin. In the Eucharist, we share in Jesus' sacrifice as it is made present on the altar. Jesus has given us the Church and the sacraments so that we may remain close to him.

Video 1



Watch *Which Jesus Is the Real Jesus?* (10 min)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/which-jesus-is-the-real-jesus/>

In this video, Fr. Mike Schmitz addresses the question of who Jesus is. He makes the point that Jesus isn't simply whomever we want him to be. While the next video will be about our personal encounter with Jesus, which is very important, this video challenges us to get to know Jesus for who he really is in light of what he actually says and does in the Gospels and, today, as he lives and moves through his Church.

Discussion Questions (9 minutes)

- What are misconceptions and caricatures of Jesus that might distort our image of him? How can we get to know the real Jesus?

Identifying our own tendencies can help. Sometimes, we want to say that Jesus is simply a nice guy, or we might fly to the opposite extreme and see him as a rigid and angry moral teacher. We come to know him as he is by immersing ourselves in the Gospels and in what Jesus says and does. He is kind and merciful. He also challenges us. Be sensitive to the perceptions expressed in your group. They might emphasize the great news that Jesus is the image of the Father's love and what it means to be fully human and alive.

- What sources in your life have most shaped the way that you see Jesus? How can you help shape your child's vision of Jesus in an authentic way?

Answers will vary. Some might answer, "The Gospels," while others might refer to images of Jesus from entertainment, talks they have attended, books they have read, or their own imagination. Allow your group to share their formative experiences and explore how they can help their children get to know the real Jesus.

Video 2



Watch *How Do I Know If I've Actually Encountered Jesus?* (7 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/how-do-i-know-if-ive-actually-encountered-jesus/>

In this video, Fr. Mike Schmitz addresses the question of who we receive in the Eucharist by sharing his own story of encountering Jesus. The discussion that follows is a chance for people in your group to reflect on their own experience of Jesus and how they understand his presence in the world and in our lives today.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- How have you personally encountered Jesus in your life? If that's hard to discuss, do you know anyone who has encountered Jesus? What convinces you that this person really encountered our Lord?

The goal here is to open a way for members of the group to share their personal testimonies. Since this is personal sharing, tell the group that not everyone has to speak. Take a moment to emphasize the powerful encounter with Jesus available to each one of us in the Eucharist.

- In the first video discussion, we talked about who Jesus is. Today's lesson approaches our Lord from a different angle—an encounter with Jesus today. The difference can be described as knowing *him* versus knowing *about* him. How do we get to know Jesus personally?

The idea is for this discussion to include the sacraments, encounters with others, service, and personal prayer. Help your groups see that the resurrected Christ is very much active now in our everyday lives.

Wrap-Up (4 minutes, return to large group)

Invite everyone back to one large group. Draw out questions about the day's content, answer them, and summarize key points. This is also a good time to congratulate parents on their commitment and provide encouragement as they begin teaching *Received* at home.

Part 3—Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

As the children return from their session with the catechist, ask the parents and children to sit together, and then have the following discussion:

- Parents and children share a bit about the activities they did and what they learned and discussed in their individual sessions.
- The Paschal Mystery (Jesus' life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension) is central to our Faith. Have each family make a poster depicting this big idea. Then, talk about it together.

End the session with a closing prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the time we just shared and for the things we have learned. We ask that your Holy Spirit continue guiding us during this month so the seed of the Gospel that has been planted in us may bear good fruit, as Jesus taught us. Amen.

Close with one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. (Invite the parents and children to pray with you. These prayers can be found on page 220 of the Student Workbook.)

January Catechist and Children's Session

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Welcome the children as they come in. Quiet the group before the prayer. Explain that by being quiet and still, we can focus on being in God's presence. Consider setting up a prayer table or sacred space to draw the children into the spirit of prayer. If there is a crucifix in the room, ask the children to face it for the opening prayer.

Ask the children if they have any intentions they would like to pray for. Consider giving them some examples of who or what to pray for. (*My grandma is sick, my mom, my friend, for beautiful weather, etc.*) Children this age may sometimes tell the entire story of why they are praying for someone. If they are offering intentions aloud, invite them to say just the name of the person they want to pray for.

Pray the Our Father together. Invite the children to turn to page 5 of their Student Workbook and pray along with you. Begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.

Independent Activities (15 minutes)

If any children come into the room after the prayer, welcome them. Ask them to take a seat and get settled. While you take attendance, invite the children to open their workbooks and begin the “Work It Out!” activities for Unit 1:

1.1 “God’s Help” Fill-in-the-Blanks, page 193

1.2 “Salvation History” Fill-in-the-Blanks, page 195

These are activities the children can do on their own as everyone gets settled, but feel free to invite them to work with a friend or as a group. If they seem confused by an activity, consider beginning it with the whole class to provide a helpful example. Let the children know that they may ask you questions at any time.

Some activities introduce vocabulary words. Be prepared to explain the meaning of these words and talk about their importance. The glossary begins on page 301 of the Leader’s Guide, and the answers to the activities for Unit 1 appear on pages 259 and 261, respectively.

Interactive Activities: Unit 1 (40 minutes)

Choose one or both activities, as time allows.

1.1 Stations of the Cross

Take the children on a reflective walk through the Stations of the Cross in the church.

Prepare: Ensure that the church is available for your visit and is accessible for everyone to view all the stations. If not, print out pictures of the stations and hang them around the room.

Direct: Walk around the church or classroom. Stop at each station, introduce it, and ask the children to think about how Jesus must have felt. After a few moments of silence, pray with them, “Thank you, Jesus, for dying for my sins. Amen.”

Consider: You may want to pray the Stations with the book your school or parish uses for children. Keep in mind that viewing the Stations of the Cross may be upsetting to some children. Be prepared to explain Jesus’ suffering and death. (See page 20 of the Leader’s Guide, Tough Question 1, “Why did Jesus have to die?” to help you prepare for this discussion. You may also find the video “Bees” from Lesson 1.1 a helpful resource.)

1.2 Physical Matter

To help the children understand how we encounter God’s presence through physical signs, they will pass around materials that are parts of the sacraments.

Prepare: Suggestions for items to have on hand to represent the sacraments

- **Baptism:** water, a baptismal candle, a white garment, chrism oil
- **Confirmation:** chrism oil, a photo of your bishop

- **The Eucharist:** bread and wine, a paten, a chalice
- **Reconciliation:** an examination of conscience, a priest's purple stole
- **Anointing of the Sick:** oil of the sick
- **Matrimony:** wedding rings
- **Holy Orders:** chrism oil

Direct: Introduce the items one by one, sacrament by sacrament, beginning with the water for Baptism. Ask them if they know what the item is used for in the sacrament and where it comes from. Allow the children to pass around each object, touch it, and even smell it. Then ask, "What does this object tell us about God?"

Consider: If a student has sensory sensitivities, ask a classmate or assistant catechist to hold the object so that the student can view it from a comfortable distance and then pass the object to the next person.

This activity is a good opportunity to ask your parish priest to visit the class and explain how the sacraments help us encounter God through physical signs.

Closing: Parents and Children Together (see Part 3, page 14)

FEBRUARY PARISH SESSION

The Director and Parents' Session takes place at the same time as the Catechist and Children's Session. These sessions cover the following lessons:

Unit 2: Who Gave Us the Eucharist?

Lesson 2.1: Jesus, the Bread of Life

Lesson 2.2: The Last Supper

Unit 3: Why Is the Eucharist Important?

Lesson 3.1: The Eucharist

Lesson 3.2: The Eucharist Changes Us

February Director and Parents' Session

Gathering and Welcome (7 minutes)

Volunteers greet and welcome participants, provide direction, and facilitate an inviting check-in process. If your situation allows, provide a sign-in sheet, name tags, coffee, and snacks at the sign-in table.

We recommend keeping the small groups the same throughout the program, to foster a sense of community among participants. To facilitate this, ask group leaders and parents to sit at the same table as in January. As before, each group should have, at most, eight parents. Hand each small group leader this list of instructions:

- Catch up with the other participants.
- Facilitate discussion.
- Gather and distribute any required materials.
- Serve as a point person for answering questions.

Once everyone is checked in and settled, welcome participants back for the second session. Remind parents about breaks, refreshments, and restrooms.

Begin the session with a prayer:

God our Father,

Your love is the source of family life, and every family is called to reflect your glory. We come before you today and seek to grow in faith, hope, and love as families in our parish. Give us wisdom and joy as we grow in our Faith and hand on the story of your love to our children. Bless our conversation today, and remain with us when we go home. Help us to take what we have learned and discussed and use it to bring our families closer to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis (13 minutes, small groups)

Begin by reflecting on the home experiences of family faith formation that took place between sessions. It is important in this process for parents to share highlights, successes, and challenges and ask questions. Have the participants break out into their respective small groups, where they will remain through Part 1 and Part 2 of the session. Give small group leaders these three prompts, which will be the same for the remaining sessions and will help establish a rhythm and pattern of sharing from month to month.

- Ask each parent to share one faith highlight or success from the past month. It might relate to last month's lessons, or it could pertain to prayer, experiences at Mass, or perhaps discussions about the Catholic Faith.
- Next, ask each parent to share what aspect of family faith formation he or she is finding the most difficult. Praying together? Going to Mass? Ask parents to name something about living out the Faith that's hard for their family.
- Finally, ask parents to state a goal or goals they want to achieve this month to improve their family's faith life.

Part 2—Units 2 and 3 Overview, Videos, and Discussion (40 minutes, small groups)

Unit 2 teaches that God loves us and always provides for us. The children will learn how God has provided for his people throughout salvation history. God gave the Israelites manna to eat in the desert. Jesus miraculously provided wine at the wedding at Cana; later, he fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Today, he feeds us in the Eucharist, and we receive him in Holy Communion.

Unit 3 shows that the Eucharist is the center of our worship and our lives as Jesus' followers. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood—his real presence—through the miracle of transubstantiation. When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Jesus himself. We receive grace, his life in us, and we are united closely with him and his Church.

Video 1



Watch *How the Eucharist Changed My Life* (10 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/how-the-eucharist-changed-my-life/>

This video is a clear and direct teaching on Jesus' real presence—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Eucharist. Not everyone has heard this explained, and everyone can benefit from diving deeper into this mystery.

Discussion Questions (8 minutes)

- What stood out to you in this video in terms of understanding the Eucharist? What will you remember? Did anything surprise you?

During the sharing, help the parents understand the Church's teaching. Having a Bible open to John 6 might help.

- How do you feel called to share the depth and power of the Eucharist with your family?
The response could involve explaining and helping children grapple with the mystery and discussing family habits surrounding Mass and Adoration.

Video 2



Watch *Did Early Christians Believe in the Eucharist?* (9 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/did-early-christians-believe-in-the-eucharist/>

This video emphasizes that our faith in the Eucharist goes all the way back to the dawn of Christian history. It will help us fortify our understanding of the Eucharist as central to our Faith.

Discussion Questions (9 minutes)

- Why does it matter to us today that saints like St. Justin Martyr taught in the year 150 that the Eucharist was the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus?
Establishing that our understanding of the Eucharist is solid and ancient, stretching back to the dawn of the Church, helps us see why the Eucharist is so central and essential to our Faith. It is critical that we understand this not only so that we can defend our Faith but also because it can help us grasp the teaching of the Eucharist more deeply and grow in holiness.
- Why are you Catholic? Why do you want your children to be and remain Catholic?
These are important questions, and it may take a minute for your group members to articulate answers. Be patient, allow spouses to discuss among themselves when possible, and offer your own reasons.

Wrap-Up (4 minutes, return to large group)

Invite everyone back to one large group. Draw out and answer questions about the day's content, summarize key points, and give parents directions and encouragement to support them through the month ahead.

Part 3—Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

As the children return from their session with the catechist, ask the parents and children to sit together, and then have the following discussion.

- Parents and children check in and share about the activities they did and what they learned and discussed.
- The Eucharist is the center of our worship. Invite parents and children to share reasons why this is true.

End the session with a closing prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the time we just shared and for the things we have learned. We ask that your Holy Spirit continue guiding us during this month so the seed of the Gospel that has been planted in us may bear good fruit, as Jesus taught us. Amen.

Close with one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. (Invite the parents and children to pray with you. These prayers can be found on page 220 of the Student Workbook.)

February Catechist and Children's Session

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Welcome the children as they come in. Quiet the group before the prayer. Explain that quietness and stillness help people focus on being in God's presence. Consider setting up a prayer table or sacred space to draw the children into the spirit of prayer. If there is a crucifix in the room, ask the children to face it for the opening prayer.

Ask the class if they have any intentions they would like to pray for. If they are offering intentions aloud, invite them to say just the name of the person they want to pray for.

Pray the Our Father together. Invite the children to turn to page 5 of their Student Workbook and pray along with you. Begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.

Independent Activities (15 minutes)

If any children come into the room after the prayer, welcome them. Ask them to take a seat and get settled.

While you take attendance, invite the children to open their workbooks and begin the "Work It Out!" activities for Units 2 and 3:

2.1 "Jesus' Names" Word Match, page 197

2.2 "Last Supper" Coloring, page 199

3.1 "God Feeds His People" Fill-in-the-Blanks, page 201

3.2 An Invitation from Jesus, page 203

These are activities the children can do on their own as everyone gets settled, but feel free to invite them to work with a friend or as a group. If they seem confused by an activity, consider beginning it with the whole class to provide a helpful example. Let the children know that they may ask you questions at any time.

Some activities introduce vocabulary words. Be prepared to explain the meaning of these words and talk about their importance. The glossary begins on page 301 of the Leader's Guide, and the answers to the activities for Units 2 and 3 appear on pages 263, 265, 267, and 269, respectively.

Interactive Activities: Units 2 and 3 (40 minutes)

Choose one or two activities, as time allows. If the church is open and your priest is available, give priority to activities 2.2 and 3.1.

2.1 Recipe Recap

This activity gives the children an opportunity to see bread as a symbol of the ways God fulfills and sustains us.

Prepare: To play an online video, you'll need a laptop, an internet connection, and a monitor that all the children can see. Search for "bread baking videos for kids" to find a video about baking bread that will appeal to children.

Direct: Play the video for the class. Along the way, stop the video and ask children to think about the ingredients and what each ingredient does for the bread. Ask questions like the following:

- What does salt do in a recipe? *It gives flavor.* How does God give flavor to our lives?
- What does flour do? *It creates the structure of the bread.* How does God give structure to our lives and our week?
- What does yeast do? *It helps bread rise.* How does God help us to rise to become the people we were created to be?
- What do you think Jesus means when he says he is the Bread of Life?

Consider: Provide the children with a handout showing pictures of salt, flour, and yeast next to the descriptions given above. Include a simple recipe for bread for the children to make at home (with a little help from someone older).

2.2 Vessels and Vestments Tour

This activity will help the children understand the different objects and items they see during the Mass.

Prepare: Speak to your priest ahead of time to see if he can show the children the sacred vessels and vestments and explain their significance. He might give them a tour of the church or bring the items into the classroom. If the priest is not available, a deacon or adult altar server might take his place.

Check ahead of time that everyone will be able to view and, when feasible, touch the items. Consider pairing the children with high school students or volunteer assistant catechists who can help with the interactive tour.

Direct: See the list on pages 80–81 in the *Received Leader's Guide*, which identifies things to notice and discuss. You may copy the pages and give them to the children to help them remember what they are learning. Feel free to shorten the list by selecting some of the objects and creating your own list (for example, holy water, baptismal font, the tabernacle, and other objects used in celebrating the Eucharist). Also, consider creating a handout showing pictures of the sacred vessels and vestments.

At the door into the church, show the children how we bless ourselves with holy water and make the Sign of the Cross, and invite them to bless themselves. Inside the church, show them how to genuflect and ask them to do the same. Any children who are unable to genuflect may bow their head or bow at the waist toward the tabernacle.

Consider: Allow the children to touch, feel, and smell items whenever possible. If a child has sensory sensitivities, ask a classmate to hold an object so that the student can view it from a comfortable distance and then pass the object to the next person.

3.1 Praying in Jesus' Presence

Prepare: Ask your parish priest if you may bring the children into the church to pray quietly before the tabernacle during the session. Consider asking high school students or volunteer assistant catechists, if available, to help the children maintain reverence. Children who need to move around more than others may have space in the back.

Direct: Before you go, ask the children, "Since Jesus is in the tabernacle, how should we act when we see the tabernacle?" Show them how to genuflect and ask them to do the same. If they are unable to genuflect, ask them to bow at the head or waist. Point out the sanctuary lamp near the tabernacle. This burns all the time to remind us that Jesus is present here.

Remind the children to maintain a quiet, reverent spirit. Ask them to sit at a small distance from one another so they aren't tempted to chat. Ask them to place themselves in the presence of God, and give them a few moments to settle. Then, read the following meditation aloud slowly and prayerfully. Consider shortening the time for silence from forty-five seconds to thirty or fifteen seconds, depending on their abilities.

Guided Meditation for Praying in the Presence of Jesus

Let's remember that we are in God's presence. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in and out.

Let's begin by making the Sign of the Cross and praying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Jesus, we know you are here. We know that you are present in the Eucharist. We know that it is you in this tabernacle! We are so lucky to get to be this close to you. Jesus, I have a lot of things I want to share with you.

Take a minute and talk to Jesus in your heart about the best part of your day.

Be silent for about forty-five seconds.

Now, take a minute and talk to Jesus in your heart about the hardest part of your day or week. What made you angry, sad, or scared? Share it with Jesus.

Be silent for about forty-five seconds.

Now, take a minute to silently tell Jesus what you need, and pray for the people you care for. Share with Jesus anything you need help with.

Be silent for about forty-five seconds.

Jesus, thank you for being here all the time so that we can be near you and talk to you. Thank you for loving us. Help us prepare our hearts to receive you. Amen.

Consider: If no one is in the church, stay and talk quietly with the children about their experiences during the meditation.

3.2 We Are All Connected in Christ

Prepare: The children can do this activity as a group or in several smaller groups. Each group will need one plastic toy hoop (like a hula hoop) large enough for the children to climb through.

Direct: Invite the children to stand in a circle. Place the hula hoop on the arm of one child in the circle and then ask all the children to link hands to make an unbroken circle. Tell them that they must pass the hoop all the way around the circle while still holding hands. Ask two or three children to show them how to do this.

When the hoop has gone all the way around the circle, tell the children that this is what it's like when we celebrate the Eucharist together. Receiving the Eucharist with others helps unite us in Christ. Worshiping with other believers strengthens our faith. And spending time with other people who love God and want to be holy helps us all live holier lives.

Consider: Be aware of physical limitations or touch sensitivities among the children that would make this activity difficult or uncomfortable. If a child cannot go through the hoop (because they are in a wheelchair, for example), it might be possible for them to start the activity by passing the hoop from one arm and, after it has gone all the way around the circle, receiving it on the other arm. Consider demonstrating this activity for the whole class using a small group of children.

Closing: Parents and Children Together (see Part 3, page 19)

MARCH PARISH SESSION

The Director and Parents' Session takes place at the same time as the Catechist and Children's Session. These sessions cover the following lessons:

Unit 4: What Is the Mass?

Lesson 4.1: The Mass Is a Sacrifice

Lesson 4.2: The Mass Is Our Worship

Unit 5: How Will I Receive Jesus and Stay Close to Him?

Lesson 5.1: Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion

Lesson 5.2: Staying Close to Jesus

March Director and Parents' Session

Gathering and Welcome (7 minutes)

Volunteers greet and welcome participants, provide direction, and facilitate an inviting check-in process. If your situation allows, remember to provide a check-in sheet, name tags, coffee, and snacks at the sign-in table.

Parents should sit at the table with their usual small group. Please hand each small group leader this list of instructions:

- Catch up with the other parents.
- Facilitate discussion.
- Gather and distribute any required materials.
- Serve as a point person for answering questions.

Once everyone is checked in and settled, welcome parents back for the third session. Remind them about breaks, refreshments, and restroom locations.

Begin the session with a prayer:

God our Father,

Your love is the source of family life, and every family is called to reflect your glory. We come before you today and seek to grow in faith, hope, and love as families in our parish. Give us wisdom and joy as we grow in our Faith and hand on the story of your love to our children. Bless our conversation today, and remain with us when we go home. Help us to take what we have learned and discussed and use it to bring our families closer to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis (13 minutes, small groups)

Begin by reflecting on the home experiences of family faith formation that took place between sessions. It is important in this process for parents to share highlights, successes, and challenges and ask questions. Have the participants break out into their respective small groups, where they will remain through Part 1 and Part 2 of the session. Give group leaders these three prompts:

- Ask each parent to share one faith highlight or success from the past month. It might relate to last month's lessons, or it could pertain to prayer, experiences at Mass, or perhaps discussions about the Catholic Faith.
- Next, ask each parent to share what aspect of family faith formation he or she is finding the most difficult. Praying together? Going to Mass? Ask parents to name something about living out the Faith that's hard for their family.
- Finally, ask parents to state a goal they want to achieve this month to improve their family's faith life.

Part 2—Units 4 and 5 Overview, Videos, and Discussion (40 minutes, small groups)

Unit 4 teaches that the Mass is the highest form of worship, the center of our lives as followers of Christ. It is how we honor God, praise him, and give him thanks for our lives and our salvation. It connects us with the Church throughout the world and throughout time, uniting us as a family of faith.

Unit 5 gives the children practical instruction on preparing for and receiving Holy Communion. The lessons also introduce them to two other ways to stay close to our Lord: in Eucharistic Adoration in the presence of the tabernacle and through the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance. The children will practice ways of showing reverence to the Eucharistic Jesus.

Video 1



Watch *Motivation to Go to Catholic Mass* (10 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/motivation-to-go-to-catholic-mass/>

This video focuses on the Mass itself. Fr. Mike Schmitz talks about his own experience growing up, about the reasons we go to Mass every Sunday, and about Mass as primarily an act of worship. This video and the lesson following will build on last month's session.

Discussion Questions (9 minutes)

- What stands out to you in the video?

Some of what Fr. Mike shares is challenging. Open up a discussion about the obligation to attend Mass each week and about when to receive and not receive Holy Communion.

- What does Fr. Mike mean when he says, "The point of Mass is worship"?

Help your group focus on the Mass itself rather than individual parts such as the homily, music, etc. Fr.

Mike's point is that while great preaching and music are gifts, we go to Mass to make an offering of ourselves.

Mass is something we do rather than something we view.

Video 2



Watch *What Really Happens in Eucharistic Adoration* (8 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/what-really-happens-in-eucharistic-adoration/>

This second video is part of the *Received* program. It has moved many hearts and creatively displays the power and significance of adoring Jesus in the Eucharist.

Discussion Questions (9 minutes)

- What stands out to you in this video? What is your experience of adoring Jesus and praying in the presence of the Eucharist?

Encourage the group to process the images and ideas in the video. They might note the song, animations, or the connection among believers through time and space. Not everyone may have experienced Eucharistic Adoration before a monstrance. You can explain that we adore Jesus after we receive him at Mass or even when we visit the church and pray before the tabernacle.

- We adore the same Jesus in the Eucharist, stretched out across time, culture, and place. How do you see the Eucharist as a connection in your own family and story?

Here, you might remind your group of their first Communion or perhaps the Holy Communion they received at Confirmation and at weddings and funerals. It may not be immediately obvious, but for a Catholic, the Eucharist is perennially present in the ongoing story of life.

Wrap-Up (4 minutes, return to large group)

Invite everyone back to one large group. Draw out and answer questions about the day's content, summarize key points, and give parents directions and encouragement to support them through the month ahead.

Part 3—Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

As the children return from their session with the catechist, ask the parents and children to sit together, and then have the following discussion.

- Parents and children check in and share about the activities they did and what they learned and discussed.
- Parents and children complete the Family Time Activity together on page 208 of the Student Workbook.

End the session with a closing prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the time we just shared and for the things we have learned. We ask that your Holy Spirit continue guiding us during this month so the seed of the Gospel that has been planted in us may bear good fruit, as Jesus taught us. Amen.

Close with one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. (Invite the parents and children to pray with you. These prayers can be found on page 220 of the Student Workbook.)

March Catechist and Children's Session

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Welcome the children as they come in. Quiet the group before the prayer. Explain that quietness and stillness help people focus on being in God's presence. Consider setting up a prayer table or sacred space to draw the children into the spirit of prayer. If there is a crucifix in the room, ask the children to face it for the opening prayer.

Ask the children if they have any intentions they would like to pray for. If they are offering intentions aloud, invite them to say just the name of the person they want to pray for.

Pray the Our Father together. Invite the children to turn to page 5 of their Student Workbook and pray along with you. Begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.

Independent Activities (15 minutes)

If any children come into the room after the prayer, welcome them. Ask them to take a seat and get settled.

While you take attendance, invite the children to open their workbooks and begin the "Work It Out!" activities for Units 4 and 5:

4.1 "Twenty-Third Psalm" Fill-in-the-Blanks, page 205

4.2 Parts of the Mass, page 207

5.1 "Blessed Sacrament" Crossword, page 209

5.2 "Adoration" Dot-to-Dot, page 211

The children can do these activities on their own as everyone gets settled, or they can work with a friend or as a group. If they seem confused by an activity, consider beginning it with the whole class to provide a helpful example. Let the children know that they may ask you questions at any time.

If an activity introduces vocabulary words, be prepared to explain their meaning and talk about their importance. The glossary begins on page 301 of the Leader's Guide, and the answers to the activities for Units 4 and 5 appear on pages 271, 273, 275, and 277, respectively.

Interactive Activities: Units 4 and 5 (40 minutes)

Choose one or two activities, as time allows.

4.1 Act It Out

In this activity, the children act out family meal scenarios based on the themes of fellowship, family history, forgiveness, and thanksgiving. By connecting the Mass to a family meal, they will see how the Mass draws us together as members of the Body of Christ.

Prepare: Divide the children into groups of three or four. Assign each group a theme: forgiveness, family history, fellowship, or thanksgiving.

Direct: Ask the children to consider how worshiping God at Mass draws us closer to one another. Remind them about what they've learned about these parts of the Mass, and use them to explain each family theme:

- The *Confiteor*: forgiveness
- Listening to Scripture: family history
- Sharing the sign of peace: fellowship
- The Eucharist: thanksgiving

Ask each group to come up with a skit based on their group's theme, acting it out as if they were at a family meal. For example, how would we show forgiveness at a family meal? Does someone like to tell stories about when they were a kid? Do we enjoy fellowship with each other and laugh together? Do we give thanks by saying grace before and after the meal?

The children can work as partners to help each other act out the scenarios, or volunteer catechists can help them.

Consider: After a group has acted out a skit for the class, ask the rest of the class to connect the skit to the Mass. What part of the Liturgy is like the scene they acted out? This will reinforce for the children how the Mass unites us as the Body of Christ.

4.2 Parts-of-the-Mass Lineup

In this activity, the children practice putting the parts of the Mass in order.

Prepare: Before class time, make signs by writing the names of different parts of the Mass in large letters on pieces of paper or cardboard. Make a sign for each student in your class.

To make the activity a little easier, consider color-coding the signs by the four major parts of the Mass—for example, blue for parts that occur during the Introductory Act, green for the Liturgy of the Word, purple for the Eucharist, and orange for the Concluding Rites.

Direct: Mix up the order of the signs and give one sign to each student. The idea is for them to work together and eventually line them up in the correct order of the parts of the Mass. Ask them to see which signs the others have and then form a line in order. If needed, help.

When everyone is standing in a line, start at the beginning and ask each child to hold up and read out his or her sign. Then, invite the children to volunteer to say one thing that happens during that part of the Mass before you move to the next child in line.

Consider: This would be a good time to invite your pastor or parish priest to the class. Invite him to offer insight on how we worship God during each part of the Mass. His visit will help the children become more comfortable with the Mass.

5.1 Practice Communion

By walking them through the motions, this activity prepares the children to receive their first Communion.

Prepare: This lesson covers the most common way churches distribute Communion. For this activity, go over the steps to receiving Communion at your parish. Be sure to cover things like approaching the altar; standing or kneeling at the altar rail; bowing, kneeling, or genuflecting just before receiving the Host; receiving the chalice (if offered); returning to the pew; and praying.

Show them how to receive the Host in the hand and how to receive it on the tongue. Both ways of receiving Jesus are acceptable. If they receive the Host on the hand, instruct them to consume it immediately. Show them how to handle the chalice with both hands, take a small sip, and return the chalice. Remind them to say “Amen” after the minister says “The Body of Christ” and “The Blood of Christ.” (Some children may need a prompt to say “Amen.”) Again, explain the specific protocols in your parish. You will act as the Eucharistic minister for the activity.

Speak with your priest to decide the best way to practice with a chalice, unconsecrated hosts, and a paten. Tasting an unconsecrated host will prepare the children for the taste and texture of the consecrated Host at their First Communion.

For any children with a gluten sensitivity or allergy, the parents can arrange with the priest or sacristan to allow the child to try a sip of wine or have a gluten-free host instead. They should make these arrangements several days or a week before their first Communion.

Direct: Ask the children to form a line as if they were going up for Communion. Ask them to walk up to you reverently, quietly, and with folded hands. After they have received, they should return to their seat and kneel in front of it.

Consider: Ask the children to talk about the experience with the group afterward. Ask them, “Is anything hard to remember? Is anything surprising? Do you have any questions?”

5.2 Eucharistic Adoration

Prepare: Ask your priest if it’s possible to arrange for a private session of Adoration for the children. If not, use your parish’s Perpetual Adoration chapel or regular time for Adoration if schedules align.

Walk the children through what to expect during Eucharistic Adoration. The Blessed Sacrament is displayed in the monstrance. We genuflect to show Jesus that we love him. We sit and quietly talk to Jesus in our hearts. We listen for what the Holy Spirit wants to tell us. When we leave, we again genuflect to Jesus.

Consider playing quiet worship music, but make sure the parish priest approves of this and all the children are comfortable with music first.

Direct: Walk the children to Adoration. When you enter, genuflect toward the monstrance and remind

them to do the same, or, if they cannot genuflect, remind them to bow their head or bow at the waist. Consider reading a brief opening prayer. Stay for a short time, maybe ten or fifteen minutes. Before leaving, lead the children in a closing prayer. Genuflect as you leave, and walk back quietly together.

Consider: Invite volunteer assistant catechists to help with this activity. Be sure to stand next to the children when they view the monstrance closely. For children who need to move around more than others, provide an area for quiet movement out of other children's view (in the back of the chapel or church, for example).

If time allows, have a sharing circle after Adoration where the children can share their thoughts and ask questions. Ask them what they thought of Adoration and how it made them feel.

Closing: Parents and Children Together (see Part 3, page 26)

APRIL PARISH SESSION

The Director and Parents' Session takes place at the same time as the Catechist and Children's Session. These sessions cover the following lessons:

Unit 6: How Do We Live Out Our Eucharistic Mission?

Lesson 6.1: Why Prayer Matters

Lesson 6.2: Caring for Other People

April Director and Parents' Session

Gathering and Welcome (7 minutes)

Volunteers greet and welcome participants, provide direction, and facilitate an inviting check-in process. If your situation allows, remember to provide a sign-in sheet, name tags, coffee, and snacks at the sign-in table.

Parents should sit at the table with their usual small group. Please hand each small group leader this list of instructions:

- Catch up with the other participants.
- Facilitate discussion.
- Gather and distribute any required materials.
- Serve as a point person for answering questions.

Once everyone is checked in and settled, welcome parents back for this fourth and final session. Quickly remind them about breaks, refreshments, and restroom locations.

Begin the session with a prayer:

God our Father,

Your love is the source of family life, and every family is called to reflect your glory. We come before you today and seek to grow in faith, hope, and love as families in our parish. Give us wisdom and joy as we grow in our Faith and hand on the story of your love to our children. Bless our conversation today, and remain with us when we go home. Help us to take what we have learned and discussed and use it to bring our families closer to you. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part 1—Preparation for Catechesis (13 minutes, small groups)

Begin by reflecting on the home experiences of family faith formation that took place between sessions. As before, parents may share highlights, successes, and challenges and ask questions. Have the participants break out into their respective small groups, where they will remain through Part 1 and Part 2 of the session. Give group leaders these three prompts:

- Ask each parent to share one faith highlight or success from the past month. It might relate to last

month's lessons, or it could pertain to prayer, experiences at Mass, or perhaps discussions about the Catholic Faith.

- Next, ask each parent to share what aspect of family faith formation he or she is finding the most difficult. Praying together? Going to Mass? Ask them to name something about living out the Faith that's hard for their family.
- Finally, ask parents to state a goal or goals they want to achieve this month to improve their family's faith life.

Part 2—Unit 6 Overview, Videos, and Discussion (40 minutes, small groups)

Unit 6, the final unit of *Received*, explores with the parents and children what the Eucharist teaches us about human dignity and how it calls us into a close relationship with God, ourselves, and others. Prayer is how we live out our relationship with God and come to know him personally, by sharing our needs with him and learning to hear his voice. The Eucharist also sends us out to do the work of Jesus to transform the world by serving others in Christ's name. This is our Eucharistic mission.

Video 1



Watch *How to be a Good Disciple of Christ* (8 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/how-to-be-a-good-disciple-of-christ/>

In this video, Fr. Mike Schmitz outlines four main principles for living as a disciple: relationship, showing up, basics, and keeping commitments. In our final *Received* session, we are challenged to deepen our commitment to Christ and to resolve to live faithfully as we form and lead our families.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- Which of the principles Fr. Mike points out come most naturally to you?
Starting here helps the discussion to stay positive. Allow your group to share their strengths.
- Which one is the biggest challenge?
This one might come more readily. We can sometimes be our own biggest critics. Listen and encourage your group as they share what they find the hardest.
- Which one do you feel called to focus on most at this point in your life, especially as you lead your family?
Affirm whatever is shared. Encourage growth and plan for the group to continue to stay in touch and support one another.

Video 2



Watch *Falling in Love and Staying in Love* (8 minutes)

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/falling-in-love-and-staying-in-love/>

In this video, Bobby Angel reflects on what it takes to keep the fires of Faith burning steadily in our lives. Just as we must put in effort to keep our marriages healthy by constantly investing in the relationship, our faith requires an investment of time, passion, habit, and heart.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- How has this family faith formation experience impacted your faith life this year?
Allow for honest sharing and reflection. What parents share here will be important for you and your faith formation team as you think about how to best serve your parish in the future. It might be useful for you to share your own growth during the Renewed and Received Family Faith Formation programs.
- What are key experiences that have fed your faith life up to now? What are some habits that you hope to nourish going forward?
Draw out some further testimony about what has brought this group of parents to where they are in their faith life up to now. Encourage whatever goals and aspirations they have going forward.

Wrap-Up (4 minutes, return to large group)

Invite everyone back to one large group. Draw out and answer questions about the day's content, summarize key points, and give parents directions and encouragement to support them through the month. Be sure to tell them about the First Communion Retreat (see page 37).

Part 3—Closing: Parents and Children Together (15 minutes)

As the children return from their session with the catechist, ask the parents and children to sit together.

As you have done before, have the parents and children check in with each other now and share about the activities they did and what they learned and discussed.

After the sharing, we suggest inviting the parents and children to pray together in thanksgiving for successfully completing their first Reconciliation and now first Communion prep in a family faith formation setting. Congratulate them and remind them what an incredible accomplishment this is.

Here is a suggested prayer ceremony:

- Make the Sign of the Cross.
- Take a moment of quiet to adore God and honor the mystery of his presence.
- Offer thanks to God for specific blessings you have received in your family.
- Offer petitions for any concerns and intentions.
- Ask God (and one another) for forgiveness for ways you have fallen short.

- Pray one Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory Be (see page 220 of the Student Workbook).
- Invite the parents and children to hug and share their favorite memories from family faith formation over the past year with each other.

April Catechist and Children’s Session

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Welcome the children as they come in. Quiet the group before the prayer. Explain that quietness and stillness help people focus on being in God’s presence. Consider setting up a prayer table or sacred space to draw the children into the spirit of prayer. If there is a crucifix in the room, ask the children to face it for the opening prayer.

Ask the boys and girls if they have any intentions they would like to pray for. If they offer intentions aloud, invite them to say just the name of the person they want to pray for.

Pray the Our Father together. Invite the children to turn to page 5 of their Student Workbook and pray along with you. Begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.

Independent Activities (15 minutes)

If any children come into the room after the prayer, welcome them. Ask them to take a seat and get settled.

While you take attendance, invite the children to open their workbooks and begin the “Work It Out!” activities for Unit 6:

6.1 “Prayer to Jesus,” page 213

6.2 “Saints” Recall, page 215

The first activity helps children formulate a prayer, while the second one invites them to recall facts about saints from the “Friends on the Journey” pages in their workbook. Help them by reviewing these pages in the *Received* Leader’s Guide (Student Workbook pages are in parenthesis):

Mary, the Mother of God, page 35 (17)

Martin de Porres, 253 (185)

Thomas Aquinas, 155 (109)

Chiara “Luce” Badano, 197 (141)

Carlo Acutis, 235 (171)

Augustus Tolton, 95 (63)

José Sánchez del Río, 135 (93)

John Paul II, 215 (155)

Children can work independently, with a friend, or as a group. Let them know that they may ask you questions at any time. The answers to the activities appear on pages 279 and 281, respectively.

Interactive Activities: Unit 6 (40 minutes)

Choose one or both activities, as time allows.

6.1 A Prayer Place

This activity helps the children imagine their own sacred space for prayer.

Prepare: Have colored paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and glue sticks available for the children. Consider finding an old catalog of religious items and cutting out pictures of things they might like to include.

Direct: Explain that personal prayer needs sacred space, sacred time, and sacred attention. (Remind them that the word *sacred* refers to things that are set aside for God.) For this activity, the children will imagine a sacred place where they can be with God and talk to him every day, either a private space at home or a special place in their hearts.

Invite the children to choose a piece of paper in their favorite color and draw what they would like their own personal prayer space to look like. Maybe they could put a crucifix there or a small statue of Mary. Maybe they could include fresh flowers sometimes. They could also hang pictures of the saints they've "met" in their "Friend on the Journey" home lessons and family photos that remind them of people to pray for. Remind them again that if they can't make this space at home, they can make it in their heart—a place where they like to go and talk to Jesus. Under their drawing, invite them to write a sentence or two describing their space.

Consider: Share a picture of your personal prayer space with the children or bring in some pictures of personal prayer spaces or home altars.

6.2 Discipleship Service Project

In this last class, brainstorm ways your class can put discipleship into action by coming up with a plan to serve others. Then execute that plan to finish your time together!

Prepare: For this activity, you'll need a board or surface to write ideas on. Draw three columns labeled "We could ...," "This shows love to ...," and "We'd need ..."

Direct: Remind the children about what they've learned about serving others, especially about showing love to all God's people because we are all made in God's image. Then, ask them to come up with ideas for things you could do as a class to show love to those who are suffering, as Jesus described in Matthew 25. As they come up with ideas, list them under the three different columns. Then, encourage the children to choose one plan and do it with their family at home.

Example:

We could ... donate food to a food pantry.

This shows love to ... people who are hungry.

We need ... to take some cans and boxed items to the food pantry at the church.

Some other ideas to get you started:

Make friendship bracelets and write letters to children who are in the hospital.

Make self-care packages for athletes participating in the Special Olympics.

Host a virtual talent show for your local nursing home.

Make personal-care kits for a local homeless ministry.

Closing: Parents and Children Together (see Part 3, page 33)

First Communion Retreat

Congratulations!

You and your catechist and volunteer assistants have successfully prepared your faith formation families for the *Received* first Communion lessons, and we hope the parents and children have completed the *Received* program at home!

The children are almost ready for their first Communion. Almost.

But first, one final get-together with all of you in attendance is important. It's called the First Communion Retreat. This retreat reviews the high points of what the children—and parents—learned over these memorable months, consolidates the concepts, and gives the children confidence before their first Reconciliation. You will celebrate, too.

Because their first Communion Mass is just around the corner, this retreat needs to be held shortly after parents have finished Unit 6 at home, ideally in late April or early May. As with the *Renewed* program, Ascension has a free First Communion Retreat outline to help you prepare for this group event (see link below).

It is a good idea to give your priest a “read-out” of the program and discuss the retreat. Be sure to invite him to the retreat, so he can welcome everyone, congratulate participants, participate in activities, and say a few words to the children about their first Holy Communion.

We thank you for your dedication to the people of your parish! Please click on the link to download Ascension's retreat content, and have a wonderful time at this special event.

In Christ,

Your Friends at Ascension



[Received First Communion retreat resource](#)