

# Editorial: Dear kids: This is what it means to receive the Eucharist

Dear First Communicants,

Congratulations! What a special time this is. It is the moment you receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time. What a blessing, and what a gift.

Receiving your first holy Communion is a big deal. You are probably excited, nervous and joyful, all at once. You've been waiting and watching grown-ups receive Communion for so long, wondering what the host would taste like and wondering what it would feel like to be able to have Jesus so close to you. Now you know. Remember that feeling of anticipation and joy always – maybe even ask Mom or Dad to help you write down what it was like!

The date of your first holy Communion is one you'll want to remember always, too, so be sure to circle it on the calendar. Maybe you were given a special rosary, missal, cross or scapular as a gift that you can keep in your room or wear as a memento of the happy day. Maybe a picture of the day can go somewhere in your home. All of these can help you remember how important the sacrament is.

But why is it important? The Church calls the Eucharist the “source and summit” of the Christian life, which means that everything about our life is meant to revolve around it. This is because the Eucharist, as you have learned so well, is Jesus Christ himself! When we receive Jesus in holy Communion, it might taste like bread and wine, but it's really and truly Our Lord himself. What a miracle!

You probably remember this from your sacrament preparation

classes, but the Eucharist renews, strengthens and intensifies our bond with Jesus Christ. This bond that begins at our baptism – another good day to know and remember – is one that we have to work at every day in order for us to be who we were created by God to be – that is, to become saints who live with Jesus forever in heaven.

Every time we receive the Eucharist, we repeat that desire with our “Amen!”, which means “Yes! I believe!” We are saying we believe in Jesus Christ and that he is truly present in front of us. We are saying we believe in the Catholic Church, which we know is Jesus’ body. We are saying we believe everything that Christ has taught us.

Really believing these things means that we will live in a special way. If we believe in Jesus and want to be like Jesus, we know we should act as he did and as he taught us. We need to be kind and generous, loving and forgiving. We need to tell the truth. We need to be obedient to God and to our parents. We need to avoid hurting other people with our words or our actions.

We also need to understand what is so special about going to Mass. Going to Mass is not the same thing as attending a basketball game or a music concert. We are not meant to go in, watch and leave again. Instead, we are totally involved in the celebration. As Christ’s body, we give ourselves to him. In return, we receive the great gift of the Eucharist to be strengthened for our mission, which is to tell the world about Jesus! The Eucharist has been called the “beating heart” of the Church. How cool is that?

As you grow up, you might hear different things about the Eucharist. You might hear some people say that it’s not really Jesus or that it’s just a symbol of Jesus. You might hear some people say that anyone has the right to receive the Eucharist at any time, even if their soul isn’t in a state of grace. Maybe you will see people who don’t genuflect in front of the

tabernacle or who disrespect the Eucharist in other ways. These words and actions are lies that the devil wants you to believe. Don't believe them!

Instead, trust in Jesus. Read the Bible with your family. Read the stories of the saints. See the difference that God has made in the lives of others. Like these holy people, get to know Jesus, love him and follow him.

Finally, a good way that we can work at being better friends with Jesus is by talking to Jesus' mother, Mary. She was the very first believer in Jesus, and she loves to help people get to know her son. Let's ask for her help so that we can love Jesus better and become the saints he calls us to be. Amen!

*Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young*