

understand everything there is to know about communion in order to participate in the Sacrament.

Here are some ideas for how to approach the conversation:

[One idea at a time.](#) You won't have just one conversation with you child about communion. You will most likely have several. So focus on one idea at a time – one meaning, one image, one question.

[Start with what is right in front of you.](#) Every time you eat, you have an opportunity to recall God's grace to you. You can begin during your very next meal or snack time with your children. Share ways in which what you're doing reminds you of what God does in the Sacrament.

[Use the familiar.](#) Almost every child has experienced a family meal, so that's a good image to begin with even for very young children. Some children have never been to a potluck dinner, so that image may not hold as much meaning for them until later. Older children who are active in sports or other activities may have attended an awards banquet, so the Feast for honored guests might be an appropriate image to explore with them.

[Look for teachable moments.](#) Take advantage of "regular" moments that can form connections to communion images. If your family takes a "trip down memory lane" recalling last summer's vacation, use it as a springboard to talk about how the Church recalls Jesus' life when communion is celebrated.

[Plan for teaching moments.](#) Sometimes we're the fortunate beneficiaries of teachable moments. At other times, we have to be intentional in our teaching. Take a few minutes to consider the different meal and family images introduced here. Then, look ahead to events in your family's life when you know there will be a connection – an upcoming birthday celebration, a holiday meal, family

night activities, etc. Before the event is upon you, think of one or two "family discussion" questions you can include in the conversation to jump start your family's thinking about communion (e.g. How is this meal alike or different from communion? What makes this time together special for our family; what makes communion time with our church friends special for all of us?).

[Go to the Story.](#) Story is a great way to help children discover and reflect. There are several biblical stories which are connected to the themes of communion. ***The Last Supper*** (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-23) can be used to explore the idea of communion as *remembering* Jesus, just as he asked; even young children can see and hear connections between what happens in the story and what happens during communion. ***The Road to Emmaus*** (Luke 24:13-35) helps children think about the *presence of Christ (communion)*. As children reach older elementary school, they are more equipped to start thinking about the idea of *sacrifice and hope*. Connecting the Sacrament to the ***Passover story*** (Exodus 11-12) can introduce these themes.

[Reflect on the experience.](#) After taking communion, talk about it! What happened? What did it feel like? How were you aware of Christ's presence? What was it like to participate with everyone else who was there? Even children who haven't received the elements can participate in the discussion by sharing about what they observed, or what it was like to receive a blessing.

[Talk to a pastor, youth pastor or children's director.](#)

Sometimes you and your children will find it helpful to talk about the Sacrament with someone outside your family group. Any of the pastors, the youth pastor or the children's director can add another voice to your discussion and help to guide your children toward the next milestone in their faith.

HOW DOES MY FAMILY TALK ABOUT ... The Sacrament of the Lord's Table?



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The Lord's Table, along with Baptism, is celebrated by Christians the world over. In our tradition it is a Sacrament. A Sacrament is a visible sign of God's invisible grace. In the Sacrament, we experience the mystery of God, but on a *practical* level, many Christians simply wonder, what *exactly* is going on? What are we doing when we celebrate the Sacrament? What is God doing when we celebrate the Sacrament?

The Lord's Table is an act of grace.

To receive grace is to receive favor – in this case, the favor and love of God. This grace brings the restoration of our relationship with God. Grace is a gift; it comes to us from the hand of God, undeserved, with no expectation that we will be able to pay him back. The Sacrament of the Lord's Table extends God's grace to all who participate.

The Lord's Table is an act of grace extended in the form of a meal.

Because God's grace comes to us as a meal, it carries many of the rich meanings we associate with meals.

It is a **Family Meal**. Families gather for meals to receive nourishment. The food they eat feeds them physically, and the time they spend with one another nourishes their spirits. In the Sacrament, the Family of God gathers to be both physically and spiritually nourished by God, the abundant Provider.

It is **Thanksgiving Dinner**. Every year in November families and friends gather for a bountiful feast. They take time from their routine to give thanks for the blessings in their lives. In the Sacrament, it is the Family of God which gathers to give thanks, not just for the physical blessings of our life, but for everything which God has done, particularly the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.



It is **Potluck**. The best part of a potluck meal is finding out what food each person has brought. Everyone brings their best offering, whether it's a homemade apple pie or a bag of potato chips. Everyone's offering is welcome, everything goes on the table together, and everyone eats together. So it is with the Lord's Table. We come with the best we have to offer (though by comparison with what God brings, we're all bags of potato chips). Every offering is welcome, we come to the table together, and everyone eats.

It is a **Feast**. Feasts are celebrations – birthday parties, award banquets, retirement dinners. The host spares no expense. The table is spread with the best food. And the honored guest sits at the head table with the host. In the Sacrament, the Church comes to the Lord's Table, and as God's honored guest, shares the meal with our host, Jesus Christ, who has spared no expense (not even his life) to fill the table with all the best blessings we could hope to receive. This is true communion. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are actually united with Christ in the Sacrament.

It is a **Sacrificial Rite**. We don't have much experience with sacrificial rites in the 21st century. But if we stop to think about where our food comes from, we understand the basic element of sacrifice ... something must die in order for us to be fed. Whether it's an animal killed for its meat, or plants harvested for vegetables, living things die in order to nourish us. The Lord's Table draws us to the sacrifice of Christ.

The Lord's Table is an act of grace extended in the form of a meal which is shared by the family of God.

The Sacrament is a *family* meal; it is communal, not private. Even when circumstances call for it to be administered privately, it is a testament to the Church's life as the Family of God. In many of the ways that a family shares its life, the Church experiences the Sacrament of the Lord's Table.

We are the Family of God. We are born into our families physically. We are born into God's family by baptism.



When the Church comes to Lord's Table, it remembers and embraces that baptism, affirming that the Church is the Family of God and each individual is a part of that Family and united with Christ.

A Family Celebrates. When something worth celebrating happens in the life of a family, the family gathers and celebrates with customs and traditions which are uniquely its own. The Family of God celebrates when it gathers to hear the Word of God, pray, share a meal at the Lord's Table, and then is sent out to do Christ's work.

A Family Remembers. "Remember that time ...?" A family often reminisces about its shared experiences, an in remembering strengthens its identity as a family. In the Sacrament, the Family of God recalls the work of God and the mission of Jesus and strengthens its own identity as a participant in that work and mission.

A Family Joins Together. Family members share a bond with one another. The bond is always present, but when family members spend time together the bond is renewed and strengthened. In the Sacrament, the Church is bonded together. Its members experience communion not only with one another, but with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and a bond that is ever present is renewed and strengthened.

A Family Imagines. Every family has hopes and dreams for its future. Family members often spend time together imagining and planning for that future. The Church, too, hopes for a better future (the completion of Christ's kingdom), and expresses that hope at the Lord's Table.

IS MY CHILD READY TO COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE?

If your children are asking questions about communion, if your children are talking more and more about their love for Jesus, if your children talk about how Jesus loves them, now might be a very good time for you to start talking to them about the Sacrament of communion. Your child doesn't need to