



First Communion



PARENT HANDBOOK



St. Ignatius
OF LOYOLA

Children's Ministry at St. Ignatius

Inspiring children to discover and embrace a joyful, fruitful, and lasting relationship with Jesus.

Is your child ready for sacrament prep?

GET READY: Warmup Requirements

First, enjoy the habit of attending mass regularly. To help your child feel connected to the church community, have them come to Catch the Wave and/or the Good Shepherd Atrium for at least a year (20 sessions).

(Hey, why not do both?)

GET SET

Once your child is in Grade 3 or older and has participated in Catch the Wave and/or the Atrium for a year, a member of the KidsMin team will reach out and invite you to enroll in an intensive 9 week session in either fall or spring.

GO!

Your child will attend 9 weeks of prep sessions, accompanied in a small group by two adult guides. At the end of that time, they'll go to Confession on a Saturday afternoon and celebrate First Communion at a regular Sunday mass.

The preparation process

Imagine if every child was being prayed for by name. Imagine if each one could be known, genuinely cared for, and could discuss and explore their faith with a trusted guide.

This culture of intentional accompaniment is how St. Ignatius encourages ongoing, authentic connection and spiritual growth. Preparing for the sacraments is an important step in the discipleship process for kids.

Every week for 9 weeks, a small group of 4-6 children will meet with a team of two adults. They'll enjoy each other's company, receive a lesson, and share their thoughts. They'll respond prayerfully with art, music, or journals. The adult guides will pray and listen, accompanying them on this step in their faith journey.

SESSION TOPICS

1

PRAYER

We can welcome Jesus as a friend into our lives. He has known us always, and he wants to be close to us. We can find him in silence, in stillness, in listening, and in pondering his words.

2

THE CHURCH

The church building is the prayer space for the community. The mass includes language, objects, and actions that help us to know and worship God.

GOD THE FATHER

3

God the Father, the Creator, offers us a “kingdom” and invites us to discover its mysterious power and its tremendous value. We express our love and gratitude in the “Our Father” prayer.

JESUS

4

*Jesus walked the earth long ago, teaching and caring for people. What's more, he is **STILL** living, God's son, the Messiah, the “Good Shepherd” who calls his sheep by name and offers his whole self in the Eucharist.*

BAPTISM

5

In the sacraments, we see and touch certain signs that point us to the rich gifts of God. Baptism is the first sacrament, when we are called by name to join the church.

EUCCHARIST

6

In the Eucharist, Jesus gives his whole self to us in the form of bread and wine. This gift of Jesus' risen life happens every time the Mass is celebrated, right up to the present time.

RECONCILIATION

7

Jesus calls us to turn towards him, to listen to his voice. When we sin, we turn away from Jesus, separated from his love and friendship. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God welcomes us back with joy.

8

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

9

HOW TO RECEIVE COMMUNION

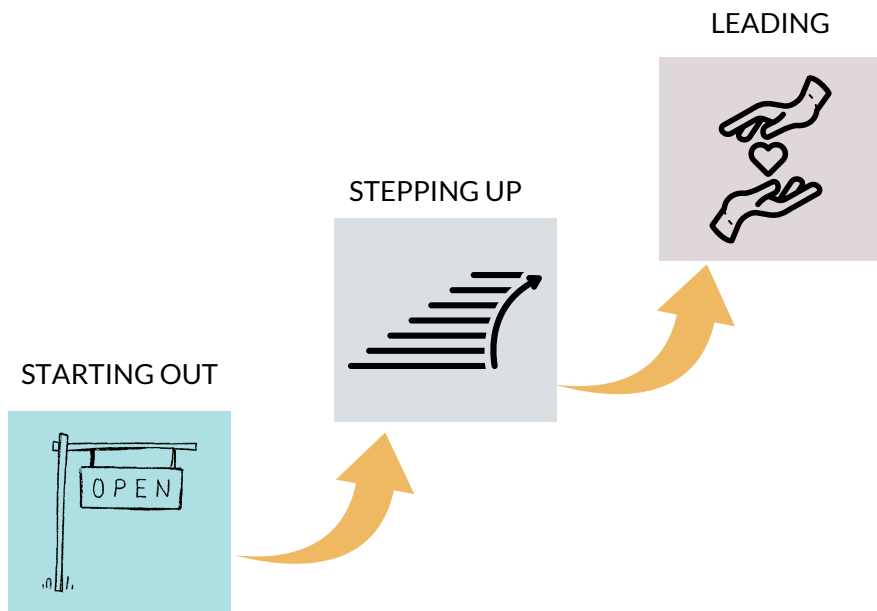
How to use this handbook

What do we dream of for children as they prepare for the sacraments? This booklet suggests some signs of basic readiness to look for, along with ideas about how children can grow and deepen their faith both during and after the prep classes.

STARTING OUT explains the basic expectations for receiving the sacraments. We'll work on these in the group sessions.

STEPPING UP suggests some "next steps" to consider.

LEADING gives some indicators for kids who are strong in their faith and eager for more.



Prayer

FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

What can parents do?

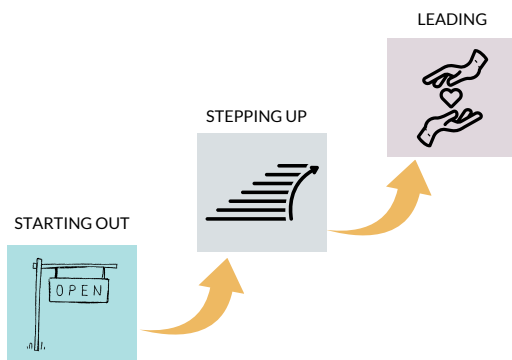
Welcome Jesus into your family's daily routines: a morning blessing, grace at meals, bedtime prayer, a family prayer corner, worship music in the car, dancing in the kitchen, whatever feels right!

Nurture a personal prayer life of your own, and let your children see you praying. *(Need help? Invest time in Alpha!)*

Have a family Bible in your house in a special place. Read picture books and show videos of Bible stories to your kids.

Talk to your kids about receiving Jesus at mass. Enjoy some time in prayer when you return to your pew after Communion.

What might this look like for your child?





LEADING

- Curious to explore the Bible more
- Can support others, perhaps by selecting scripture or songs for community prayer
- Enjoys a variety of prayer types, such as praise, petition, contrition



STEPPING UP

- Truly enjoys spending time in prayer
- Has some favorite Bible passages, songs, or stories
- Prays for others as well as for themselves
- Creates art, music, or poetry to pray with



STARTING OUT

- Shows openness to praying
- Thinks of prayer as a conversation with Jesus
- Understands that the Bible is God's word, a precious gift so we can know Him better

What can parents do?

From an early age, trace the sign of the cross on your child's forehead as a bedtime blessing.

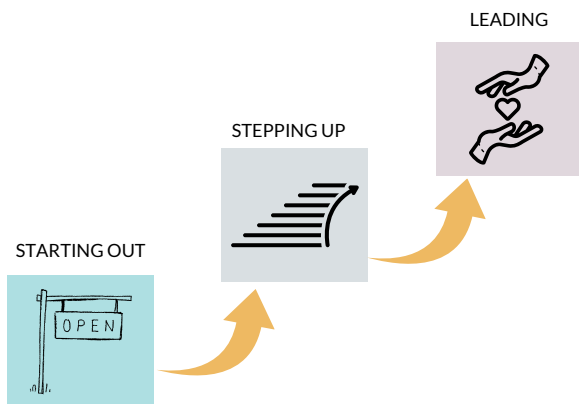
Get a children's guide to the mass (missal) so they can follow along.

Spend some time yourself learning about the richness of Catholicism; for example, find an app or podcast, join a course or study group.

Talk after mass about the Sunday readings and Catch the Wave.

Explore the church building, looking at objects and artwork. How do they point us towards God? Genuflect towards the tabernacle as a sign of reverence and respect.

What might this look like for your child?



LEADING

- Participates enthusiastically at mass, and might take on a role such as altar server
- Can witness to others about their experience of the sacraments
- Helps others to enjoy their experience in the church by volunteering and welcoming them

STEPPING UP

- Understands the Last Supper as the place where Jesus gave his whole self to us
- Knows the Our Father by heart
- Understands the basic pattern of the mass and follows along with words and actions

STARTING OUT

- Knows the sign of the cross, how to genuflect, and that "Amen" means "yes"
- Puts effort into focusing at mass
- Knows that Jesus is present in the bread and wine

Being a Christian WALKING WITH GOD

What can parents do?

Use the language of conscience -- "What would Jesus do?"

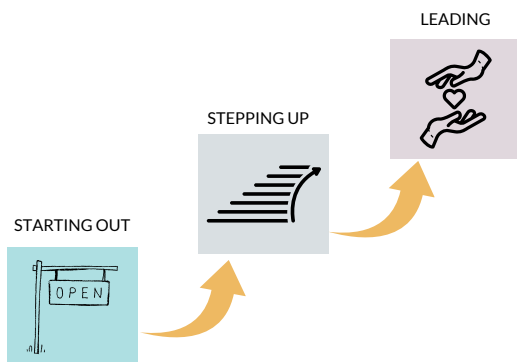
Share times when you pray over a difficult decision.

Show children how to own one's behavior, how to apologize, and how to look for opportunities to show kindness and care for people who are hurting.

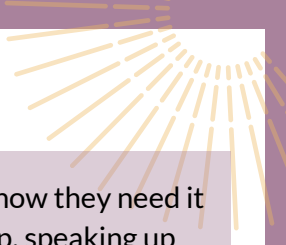
Make a habit of going to Confession. Let your kids know this matters.

Share photos and stories of your own experiences of the sacraments, and bring your kids to baptisms, weddings, funerals. Express encouragement towards religious vocations and the sacrament of marriage.

What might this look like for your child?



LEADING



- Asks for Confession when they know they need it
- Takes initiative by offering to help, speaking up about things that are wrong, and taking actions to make things better
- Gets involved in community service or care-giving projects

STEPPING UP



- Genuinely seeks Jesus' help in doing good and avoiding sin
- Shows empathy and recognizes how their actions affect others
- Is familiar with moral guidance such as the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes

STARTING OUT



- Recognizes that sin separates us from God and that confession heals that separation
- Knows the difference between a sin and an accident
- Recognizes the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40)

REFLECTION

To what extent does your child ...

... know and care about Jesus?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

... feel happy, comfortable, and respectful at church?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

... take time to pray?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

... show curiosity about receiving Communion?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

... speak up when they've done something wrong?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

... seem eager and excited to receive Communion?

☐ Hmm ... not yet ☐ I sometimes see this. ☐ Yes, for sure!

What else do you notice about your child's faith?

Last words: Keep the big picture in mind

A **relationship** with Jesus is **a blessing and a grace!** Through our witness, our prayers, and community support, we can work with God to foster the blessings of faith in the lives of our children.

BLESSINGS

- a personal prayer life
- a desire and appreciation for receiving Jesus in the Eucharist
- an orientation towards doing what's right and making the world better



Knowledge of our faith is a treasure that can be passed from person to person. Our Catholic tradition is rich with stories, rituals, and language that we can learn about and share, to help one another grow and come closer to God.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FAITH

- the Word of God
- the power of the sacraments
- traditions of Catholic prayer, worship, and social justice



The Our Father

Our Father
Who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
They will be done
On earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily
bread
And forgive us our
trespasses
As we forgive those who
trespass against us.

And lead us not into
temptation
But deliver us from evil.

Amen.

The Glory Be

Glory be
to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the
beginning,
Is now,
and ever shall be,
world without end.

Amen

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among
women
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of
God
Pray for us sinners
Now and at the hour of
our death.

Amen



An Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my
sins with all my heart. In
choosing to do wrong and
failing to do good, I have
sinned against you whom I
should love above all
things.

I firmly intend, with your
help, to do penance, to sin
no more, and to avoid
whatever leads me to sin.

Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us. In
his name, my God, have
mercy. Amen.





Examination of Conscience for Kids

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.

- *Do I remember to pray to God every day?*
- *Do I always use the name of the Lord in a holy way?*
- *Do I show reverence to God at church?*

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
On earth, as it is in heaven.

- *Am I kind to others? Do I resist cruelty and bullying?*
- *Am I helpful to others, especially my parents, brothers, and sisters?*
- *Do I try my best to work hard at school and at home?*

Give us this day our daily bread

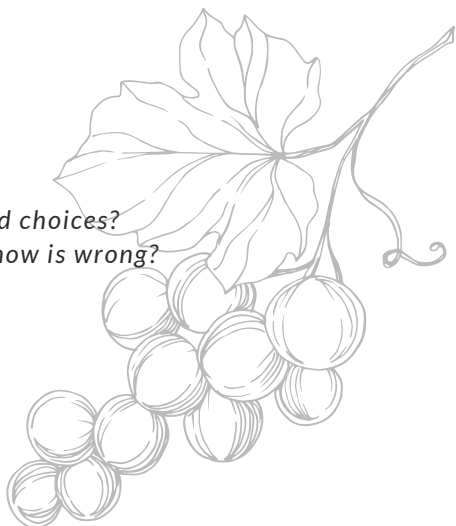
- *Do I notice and say "thank you" to God and to others for their generosity and kindness?*
- *Do I try to be helpful to those who don't have enough?*

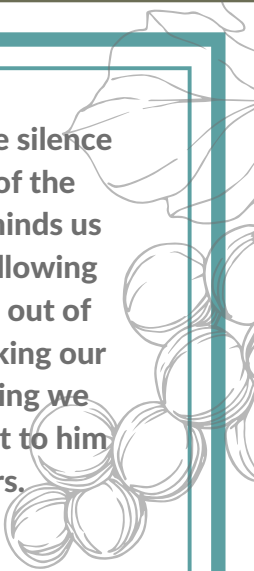
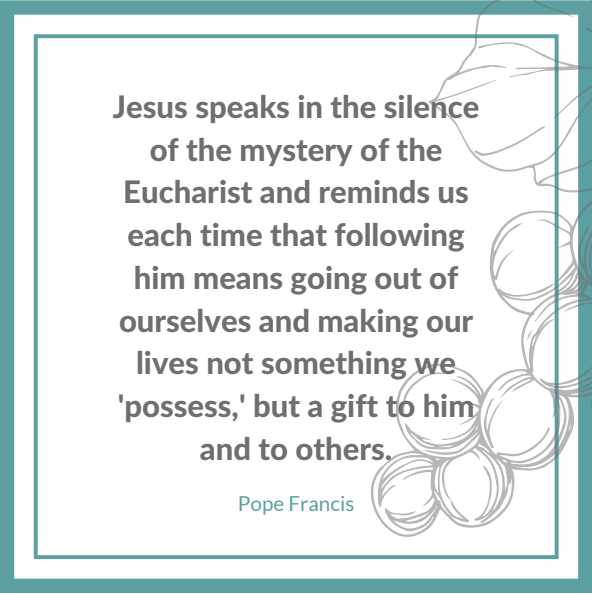
Forgive us as we forgive others

- *When I am wrong, do I say "I'm sorry" and really mean it?*
- *When someone hurts me, do I think about being mean and getting even, or do I try to make things better?*

And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.

- *Do I play fairly in sports and games?*
- *Do I tell the truth?*
- *Do I let other kids tempt me to make bad choices?*
- *Is there anything else I've done that I know is wrong?*





**Jesus speaks in the silence
of the mystery of the
Eucharist and reminds us
each time that following
him means going out of
ourselves and making our
lives not something we
'possess,' but a gift to him
and to others.**

Pope Francis



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