

First Communion Retreat

Timeline for Prep

4–6 Weeks Before

- **Confirm Clergy & Sacred Spaces:** Reserve the parish hall, church sanctuary, sacristy, and kitchen. Confirm Father's or the Deacon's availability for the entire day, specifically for:
 - Talk 2 demonstration (vestments & sacred vessels)
 - Adoration & Benediction
- **Send RSVPs & Family Information:** Send event details to parents including schedule, dietary requests, and expectations (e.g., at least one parent must attend).
- **Recruit Key Volunteers:**
 - **Hospitality Team:** Morning setup, lunch coordination, snack prep.
 - **A/V & Music Lead:** Sound system setup, worship leading during praise/music time and Adoration.
 - **Small Group / Table Facilitators:** Volunteers to assist families with discussion prompts and activities.

2–3 Weeks Before

- **Finalize Talk Speakers:** Assign the 4 talks to parish staff, catechists, or guest speakers, sharing the outline provided.
- **Sacristy Prep (Coordinate with Sacristan/Father):**
 - Confirm the following will be available on the day of the retreat: vestments (Alb, Cincture, Stole, Chasuble) Chalice, Paten, Ciborium, Corporal, Purificator, Cruets, and Monstrance. For Talk 2 demonstration.
 - Confirm incense, charcoal, and altar candles are stocked for Adoration.
- **Gather Craft & Family Activity Supplies:**
 - Craft paper, markers, pens, and cardstock for the "Letters to Jesus".
 - Bibles for each family table for Talk 2.
 - Dinner invitation props for Talk 1.
 - Lantern/flashlight visual for Talk 4.

1 Week Before

- **Confirm Catering / Food Orders:** Finalize counts for light breakfast (pastries, juice, coffee), snacks, and lunch (or send a reminder if pack-your-own).
- **Print Materials:**
 - Welcome packets & Master Schedules for families.



- Family discussion guides and Bible verse sheets for Talk 2.
- Adoration worship aids (hymns like *O Salutaris Hostia*, *Tantum Ergo*, and the Divine Praises).
- Name tags for children, parents, and volunteers.
- **A/V & Media Check:** Test microphones, projectors (if showing slides/lyrics), and music playlists in both the parish hall and church sanctuary.

Day Before the Retreat

1 Set Up

Ideally complete the evening before if the space is available to you.

Arrange round tables so children and parents sit together. Set up a welcome table at the entrance with name tags, schedules, and pens. Set up the speaker/presentation area.

2 Prep Food & Beverage Station

Kitchen check

Stage paper products (plates, cups, napkins, utensils), coffee urns, and trash bins.

3 Sanctuary & Sacristy Walkthrough

Coordinate with clergy

Ensure the sanctuary is clean, the monstrance is easily accessible, and the sacristy items for the demonstration are organized on a table.

Morning of the Retreat

- **7:30 AM – Hospitality Prep:** Brew coffee, set out breakfast items, and place water pitchers at tables.
- **8:00 AM – Volunteer Check in:** Gather staff/volunteers for a 5-minute prayer, review team roles, and distribute name tags.
- **8:15 AM – Music:** Play welcoming background music as families begin arriving.

Time	Activity	Location
8:30 AM	Arrival, Registration, & Light Breakfast	Parish Hall
9:00 AM	Welcome, Opening Prayer, & Icebreaker	Parish Hall



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9:15 AM	Talk 1: The Great Dinner Party (God's Loving Invitation)	Parish Hall
10:00 AM	Rotation 1: Tour of the Church	Main Sanctuary
10:45 AM	Break / Snack	Parish Hall
11:00 AM	Talk 2: God Speaks to Us (Listening at the Mass)	Parish Hall
11:45 AM	Rotation 2: Vestments & Holy Vessels (Behind the Scenes)	Sacristy / Sanctuary
12:30 PM	Family Lunch (Provided or Pack-Your-Own)	Parish Hall / Outdoors
1:15 PM	Praise & Worship Song / Energizer	Parish Hall
1:30 PM	Talk 3: Transubstantiation - Ordinary Bread, Extraordinary God	Parish Hall
2:15 PM	Family Activity: Letters to Jesus & Craft	Parish Hall
2:45 PM	Talk 4: Sharing Jesus in the World	Parish Hall
3:15 PM	Preparation & Walk to Church	Main Sanctuary
3:30 PM	Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction	Main Sanctuary
4:00 PM	Closing & Departure	Main Sanctuary

Welcome and Opening Prayer:

- Welcome everyone to the retreat.
- Opening prayer:



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Dear Jesus,
Thank you for loving us so much.
Thank you for gathering us together today for our retreat.
Bless the children here who are getting ready to receive you
in the Holy Eucharist for the very first time.
Open our hearts, our minds, and our ears
to learn more about your great gift of love.
Help us to grow closer to you today
in our work, our play, and our prayers.
Amen.

Extra Idea: Use a verse to sing throughout the retreat that can then be sung to Jesus during Adoration you can introduce it at the beginning of the retreat and have breaks throughout where you can practice your song for Jesus.

One possibility is:

“Jesus, I adore You. Lay my life before You. How I love You.”

Or another short refrain that the participants might know or is easy to teach.

Talk 1: God’s Great Invitation

- **Core Message:** Mass isn't just an obligation; it's a family celebration where God invites us to His table.
- **Key Visual/Object:** A fancy dinner invitation card.
- **Content:**
 - Compare the Holy Mass to a special family feast or birthday party.
 - *To the Children:* Jesus personally wants you at His table!
 - *To the Parents:* Remind them of their own First Communion and the gift of walking alongside their children today.
 - **Discussion Prompt** *Share a favorite family meal memory and discuss why eating together brings us closer.*

Talk 2: God Speaks to Us — The Liturgy of the Word

- **Core Message:** Mass is a conversation. Before Jesus feeds us with His Body and Blood, He feeds our minds and hearts with His Word.
- **Key Visual/Object:** A large Lectern Bible / Lectionary.
- **Content:**
 - Explain the two main parts of Mass: *Liturgy of the Word* and *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.
 - *To the Children:* How do we listen when God speaks? (Quiet hearts, sitting up, responding “*Thanks be to God*”).



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- Highlight the Gospel reading as the highlight of God's Word where we hear Jesus' actual words and deeds.
- **Activity:** Parents/guardians and children open a Bible together and highlight a short favorite verse to write down as their "motto" for First Communion day.

Talk 3: "Bread No More" — The Mystery of Transubstantiation

- **Core Message:** The Eucharist is not a symbol-it is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ.
- **Key Visual/Object:** A wrapped present. (The wrapping looks normal, but the gift inside is invaluable.)
- **Content:**
 - Keep it clear and wonder-filled: Explain *Transubstantiation* simply (what it *looks* like stays the same, but what it *is* deep down completely changes).
 - Share a simple story of a Eucharistic Miracle (e.g., the Miracle of Lanciano) or St. Tarcisus.
 - Could introduce St. Carlo Acutis and his work collecting Eucharistic Miracles on a website <https://www.miracolieucaistici.org>
 - Address how to physically receive the Host reverently (hand vs. tongue, saying "Amen!"). You could practice this with unconsecrated hosts if there is time.

Talk 4: Sharing Jesus in the World

- **Core Message:** When you receive Jesus, you carry His light into your home, school, and friendships.
- **Key Visual/Object:** A lantern or flashlight.
- **Content:**
 - "You are what you eat!" When we receive Jesus, we are called to act like Him.
 - Encourage parents to establish family Eucharistic traditions (e.g., Sunday Mass routines, quick visits to the Blessed Sacrament during the week).
 - **Prayer intentions for Jesus:** Take time for each child and guardian to write a prayer intention on a note card or piece of paper that will then be brought to Adoration to place before Jesus.

Interactive Stations & Demonstrations

1. Tour of the Church

Take the kids and guardians through the sanctuary, pointing out key sacred spaces:

- **The Baptismal Font:** Where their journey in God's family began.
- **The Ambo / Lectern:** Where God talks to us in the Scripture readings.
- **The Altar:** Where the sacrifice happens. Practice bowing to the Altar.



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- **The Tabernacle:** Point out the Sanctuary Lamp (red light) and explain that Jesus is home. This could also be a good time to teach how to genuflect.
- **The Statues & Windows:** Show saints and Bible scenes depicted around the church to explain how they inspire us.

2. Father's Vestments & Mass Sacred Vessels

Have Father or a Deacon host this session in the sacristy or sanctuary:

- **Part A: The Vestments**
 - Show each garment as Father puts it on: *Amice/Alb* (purity), *Cincture* (purity/prayer), *Stole* (priestly authority), and *Chasuble* (charity/yoke of Christ).
 - Briefly explain liturgical colors (Green = ordinary time, Red = Holy Spirit/martyrs, White/Gold = celebration, Purple = preparation/penance).
- **Part B: Holy Items Used at Mass**
 - Let children get up close to see:
 - **Chalice & Paten**
 - **Ciborium** (Holds the hosts for the congregation).
 - **Corporal & Purificator** (The special linens used on the altar).
 - **Cruets** (Water and wine jars).
 - **Monstrance** (Explain how this will be used during Adoration later in the day).

Concluding Session: Eucharistic Adoration

1 Gather families quietly into the main church. Soft instrumental music or quiet chant sets a reverent tone. Dim non-essential lighting if possible.

2 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

The Priest or Deacon exposes the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance on the altar, incenses the altar, and leads the opening hymn (e.g., *O Saving Victim / O Salutaris Hostia*).

3 Guided Meditation (10 Mins)

Provide brief, guided silence tailored for young kids:

- Invite them to kneel or sit comfortably, look directly at the Monstrance, and whisper in their hearts: *"Jesus, I love You. Thank You for coming here for me."*
- Read a short Gospel passage (e.g., Jesus blessing the children in Mark 10:13-16).

4 Prayer & Benediction (15 Mins)

- Place a basket in front of the Altar and show how you can go up to the Altar genuflect (or bow if necessary) and place your prayer intention in the basket for Jesus.



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- Lead the Litany of Praise / Divine Praises.
- Conclude with **Benediction** (Blessing with the Monstrance) and a joyful recessional hymn (e.g., *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*).

