



NOURISH

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*At-Church  
Support Materials*



Faith and Family Life  
Catholic Ministries

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# TIME IS HOLY

## PARENTS

*(For use when beginning Family Meetings at-home with Nourish. If they have already experienced Time is Holy, you can include the below [introduction to Nourish](#) in Session 1. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of the Session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Small Group Question 1/2 Sheet (1 per parent)
- Nourish Boxes
- Family Meeting Guide Videos ([Download Link](#))
- Candle
- Lighter
- Pens (1 per parent) ([Purchase Here](#))

### Set-Up:

- Group Table
  - Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Pens (1 per parent)
- Prayer Table
  - Candle

## GATHER

Thank you for joining us today. Our goal for this meeting is that you leave here feeling inspired and prepared to lead Family Meetings in your home.

The theme is: Time is Holy. How we spend our time matters.

Somehow I think we have been programmed to think holiness happens only at Church, or in Mass, or when we are reading the Bible. We matter to God all the time. His holiness is in the midst of life, all around us. I think he loves to see us laughing together, building with Legos at home, out at the park, at a birthday party, in a classroom, at work, and spending time with him.

We all know that time is finite, there is a limited amount of it and we can't get more. So we as parents have to decide how we want to spend it. We set schedules and decide what we feel is important for our children.

## CHECK-IN

Keeping in mind our “time” theme - I am going to have you reflect on two questions. A paper with these questions and a pen to journal with are available at your place. Take a few minutes to reflect and write.

**How does your family rest and relax?  
Personally, how do you rest, reflect, and evaluate?**

We will now take some time to share with one another. **Introduce yourself by sharing your name, the ages of your children, and a simple outline of your day so far, how you have spent your time.** Then discuss a couple of your answers to the reflection questions you just journaled about.

*(Give them some time to pair share or share in their family pod or small group.)*

Let's take a moment and look at how God spent his time as he was busy creating the world. God created the world for six days. He spent this time working, designing, dreaming, and creating. Then he took a day to rest, reflect, and be present to it. We call this day the Sabbath. The seventh day!

God knew we needed a seventh day, a sabbath, and he included it as one of the 10 Commandments: “Keep holy the sabbath.” A day to worship, to be with those we love, to rest, and rejuvenate. He knew how important this time would be for us to be happy, holy, and healthy.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters have taken to heart this message. At sunset on Friday evening, as the sun leaves the earth, the woman of a Jewish home gathers her family, lights her menorah (candelabra), and prays a special prayer over all of them. As she prays, she invites her family to make three circles with their arms, bringing the light from the candles toward themselves. Then, she asks them to cover their eyes with their hands, in order to be completely present to the light as she finishes the prayer. She tells them to be with God, the light of the world, who leads them through the darkness.

For the next 24 hours, they do not work. The food will have already been shopped for, the house cleaned, and the meals prepared. Sabbath is their time to stop and enjoy the most important things. To spend time eating around a table, to enjoy quiet time, to worship together, visit, and play. A time to let the rush and anxiety go. A Jewish young

## TIME IS HOLY - PARENTS

adult once said, "When my mom lights the candles on Friday evening - I find myself again."

How do we as families find ourselves again? How do we center ourselves to be present to the most important things? How do we schedule time to be with the people we love and have conversations that help form and inform who we are? If we are honest with ourselves, I think most of us would agree that we really don't want "more" but we do want "meaningful."

But somehow Sunday's have become just another day. There are sports games, practices, shopping to do, work, etc. Sometimes it even seems difficult to squeeze in an hour for Mass. A complete 24 hour sabbath does not seem realistic for most of us, but maybe we can find moments to set aside for a "holy pause" throughout our week. Say that together with me: "Holy Pause." It just sounds good! Moments to sit in the same room together with your family and talk about things that are important, surrounded by God's presence.

You are being given resources that invite you into a "holy pause." Each time you engage the materials I want you to think...holy pause. This book and/or box will be your faith formation experience. It is intended to help you have meaningful moments with the people you love most! Will it be perfect, no. Will there be meltdowns, probably. But there also will be silly and profound things said, prayers read, and little voices sharing about who God is. Time well spent!

## OPENING PRAYER

Before I introduce you to the resources I want to invite you into a holy pause. To pray for a few moments in the light.

*(Light a candle.)*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

I invite you to make three circles with your hands, bringing the light towards yourself. *(Model it for them.)* Now completely cover your eyes with your hands. For a few moments be only with the light, completely in the presence of God. *(Model it for them.)*

## TIME IS HOLY - PARENTS

*God of light, illumine our paths and fill our homes. Help us to stay close to you as we parent and lead. God, you have given us the greatest gift, our children, and for that we are so grateful.*

Right now I invite you to say the name of each of your children quietly. *(Pause and wait.)*

*God I give you my children by name - I love each one so very much, as I know you do. Please help me lead them toward your light. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## TEACHING

We are now going to dive into the resources that you will be provided to help you facilitate holy pauses in your home with your family. These holy pauses will follow the pattern of a Family Meeting.

We will now watch a video that breaks this open more, with some real parents.

*(Play Family Meeting Guide for Parents. After the video, if needed, talk to them a little bit more about their role and see if they have any questions.)*

## NOURISH

*(Pass out the boxes or refer to the digital version.)*

You may feel ill-equipped or unprepared for the task of being the primary catechist of your children. Don't worry, you are not alone. That is a feeling many parents experience. We may be tempted to delegate this responsibility off to a trained catechist at-church, but the truth is that your voice is the most important in the life of your children. Even more important is the witness of your life. When your life and your words point to Jesus we can be sure your children will get to know him through you.

*Nourish* is a first Communion family experience designed to equip you to teach, share faith, and pray with your children as you lead to Family Meetings in your home through a variety of hands-on and innovative activities. We pray you will encounter Jesus and experience the beauty of the Mass as it connects to daily life by building puzzles, baking, reading Scripture, engaging in meaningful conversation, and much more. It is an opportunity to dive deeper into the incredible gift God gives us - the Eucharist.

You will also be accompanied by a catechist or coach and pod or small group of parents who you will check-in with periodically to share your reflections, encourage each other on the journey, and have any questions answered. Each at-church Session you will be given an opportunity to share your experiences with the Family Meetings you recently completed. You will be asked: How did the Family Meeting go at-home? What went well? What was difficult? We hope through this process that you will learn to share your faith with your family, not just as an idea, but as a lived experience. It may be awkward at first, but trust us, the results will be life-giving. The meetings will also include separate content for parents and children, ending with a shared prayer experience.

Take a moment to look through the box as your children return to the room.

*(Have the children join their parents and when sit at a new table all together.)*

We are now going to experience a Family Meeting together with another real family through a video.

*(Play Family Meeting Guide for the Entire Family. Pause and play as instructed. No additional supplies will be needed.)*

Family Meetings can be fun and meaningful moments to connect as a family and learn about our faith. You will be sent home with a box full of Family Meetings. When you get your box, open it up and take a peek inside. Be sure to bring this box out of your car and into your home when you get back. Parents you may not remember, but I'm sure your children will.

We will now take a quick look at all the materials inside. *(Do a quick overview about the box with children present. Help the families to get excited, by highlighting certain parts. Let them know each lesson has something to learn and something hands-on to play or do. Their living room will be their "classroom" and their parent/s are the "teachers.")* It's going to be fun!

Time together, just your family, getting to know more about Jesus.

*(Ask the children to help them out by listening and getting involved. Be sure to review the schedule for the Mini-Series, at-church Sessions, and Family Meetings including how they will complete the Family Follow Throughs, on Martha or another way. Let them know you are with them every step of the way. If they are struggling, or have questions, invite them to let you know. If needed, you can conclude by answering any questions. This may be difficult with restless children, read the room.)*

## CLOSING PRAYER

We will now conclude with a prayer as a group. Make one big circle around the room facing inward towards each other.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, bless all our families. Help us to grow closer to you and each other as we begin to find moments for holy pauses in our homes.*

Please now turn around and face outwards (not looking at each other).

*God, help us to take our faith and your love out of this room. Guide us as we share our faith with others outside these doors, with our friends, neighbors, in our classrooms, and workplaces. You send us out to be your hands and feet in the world. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*(Add any last minute announcements. If possible, be at the door to say goodbye as families leave. This can be tough, usually people want your individual attention about something. Your team members can also be at the doors to say: "Goodbye, we can't wait to see you next time! Don't forget to get the box out of your car. We are praying for you." etc.)*



## TIME IS HOLY - PARENTS

How does your family rest and relax?

Personally, how do you rest, reflect, and evaluate?

Share your name, the ages of your children, and a simple outline of your day so far,  
how you have spent your time.

## TIME IS HOLY - PARENTS

How does your family rest and relax?

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Share your name, the ages of your children, and a simple outline of your day so far,  
how you have spent your time.

# TIME IS HOLY CHILDREN

## Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Clock Craft Sheet (1 per child)
- Clock ([Purchase Here](#))
- Candle
- Religious Images or Statues
- Music & Speakers
- Markers ([Purchase Here](#))
- Scissors ([Purchase Here](#))
- Glue Sticks ([Purchase Here](#))
- Brad Pins ([Purchase Here](#))
- Prize for the Game

## Set-Up:

- Prayer Table
  - Religious images or statues
  - Clock

## GATHER

*(Welcome and gather children together as they are being dropped off and parents are moving to their own meeting space. Set a clock in the center of a table with a candle.)*

Welcome everyone! We are so happy to spend this time with you. I have set a clock on our prayer table today, because we are going to talk about time and the different ways we spend it.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin with a prayer.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## TIME IS HOLY - CHILDREN

*Jesus, thank you for this time we have to spend with you. Help us to remember that you are with us every second of every day. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# GAME

We are now going to play a game. God's word, in the Bible from the book of Ecclesiastes, tells us that he has provided us with a time for every purpose under heaven. He has given us time for so many different and important things! There is a time to be born, a time to be silent, a time to talk, a time to laugh, and even a time to dance. We are going to celebrate these different times by sharing and acting some of them out.

### **God has given us a time to dance:**

*(Have a short freeze dance. Play Pharell Williams' song "I'm Happy" or a Christian song children can move to. Let them dance and then periodically stop the music and have them "freeze" in place. You can work towards a winner by having children sit out if they move, or just keep playing all together.)*

God loves to see us rejoicing! In the Scriptures we know Jesus attended weddings and celebrations and I'm sure he danced with his family and friends, too.

### **God has given us a time to laugh:**

*(Ask if anyone has a funny joke to tell. Have them share a few. Prepare a few in case no one volunteers.)*

Giggling and laughing together is an important use of our time. God made a world that has funny moments in it!

### **God has given us a time to be born:**

*(Have the children share with the person next to them when their birthday is. Give whoever has a birthday closest to today a small gift/prize.)*

God decided perfectly the day and time each of us would be born, and what family we would be born into! Our Birthdays help us to always remember our first "birth" day.

### **God has given us a time to speak:**

*(Have the children share with the person next to them what their favorite time of the day is and why.)*

Aren't you glad God gave us language so we can have conversations with one another? Life would be really boring if no one ever talked. Thank you God for allowing us to get to know each other with our words.

## TIME IS HOLY - CHILDREN

**God has given us a time to be silent:**

*(Gather children and challenge them to be silent for 1 minute. Then you can double it to 2 if possible, deciding the time length based on the age of the children.)*

We know Jesus took time on earth to be quiet and talk to God when he was troubled and worried. Prayer is the time we can talk quietly to God.

Jesus knows how important all of these different “times” are in our lives. He knows because he lived on this earth and spent time experiencing them, as well.

## ACTIVITY

We have talked about some of the ways we spend our time, now we are going to do a craft where we each make a clock.

The middle of our clocks say: “Time is Holy,” this reminds us that Jesus is present in everything we do. He loves to see us laugh and play, he also knows our sadness and disappointment.

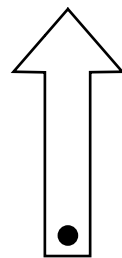
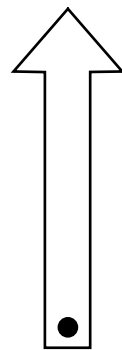
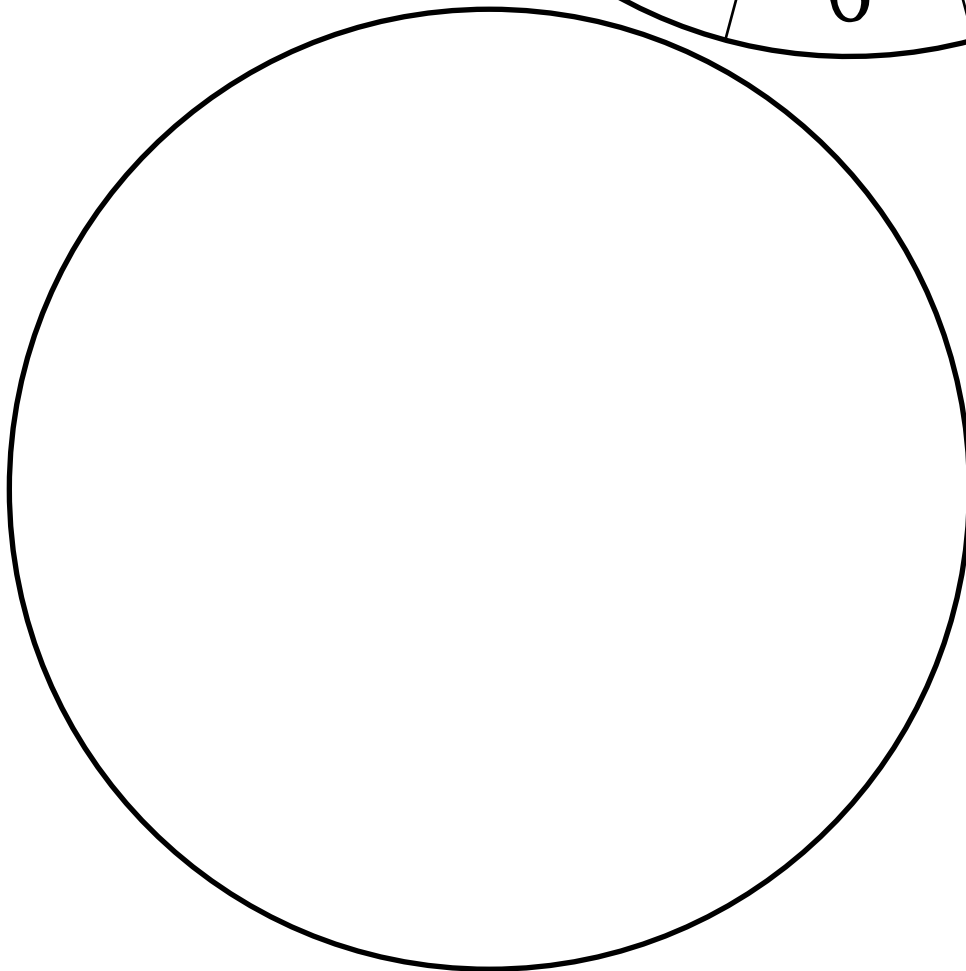
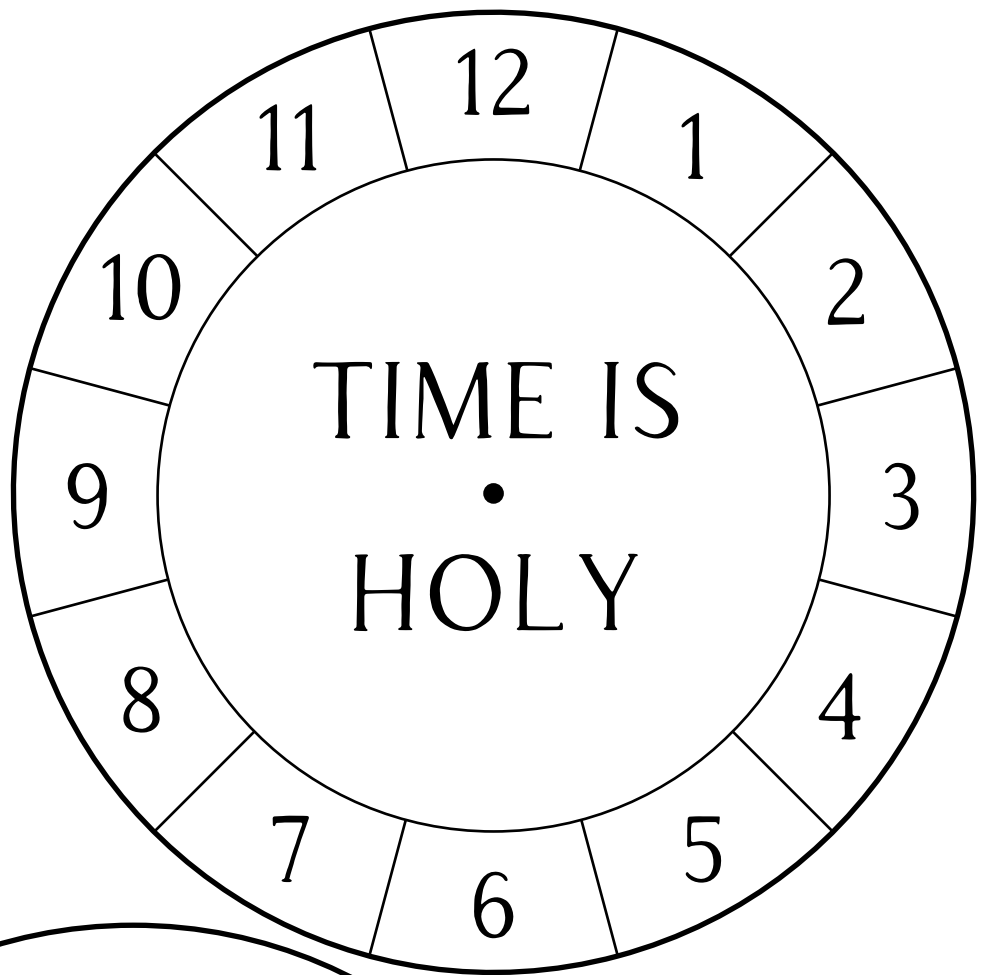
*(Lead the children in completing the Clock Craft. Instructions can be found on the printable PDF. You may need to provide some examples, such as: if you eat dinner when it's dark outside it's probably 6:00, if you go to baseball or dance after school it's probably 4:00, if you say bedtime prayers that's probably at 7:30, etc. Children may not know exact times, and that's okay!)*

We are going to meet back up with your parents. They too have been talking about “time.” You are going to hear about something called a “holy pause” that you will be doing together as a family. You will be given a special box to help with this. Listen closely because you are going to be an important part of helping your mom and dad share this time with you! Don't forget to share your experience and the clocks you made with your parents.

*(Return to parents.)*

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Color then cut out all of the pieces.
2. Cut the lines between the numbers on the clock.
3. Glue the clock to the back circle.
4. With the brad pin attach the clock arrows to the center.
5. Write some things you do at the different times behind the numbers.



# NOURISH AT-CHURCH

It is important to have parents gathered periodically throughout the *Nourish* process.

The goal of gathering is to:

- Find out what is going well and what parents are struggling with in the *Nourish* Box Family Meetings.
- To encourage, deepen, and support their experience of the Family Meetings with any tips, inspiration, or information.
- To meet and hear from other parents on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of adults, especially parents!
- To give children a positive and meaningful experience at-church.
- To pray together - for each other and for their families.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating family Sessions held at-church throughout the *Nourish* experience. The sessions include separate experiences for parents and children, and a combined family prayer experience to close your sessions.

There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame in the Sessions and a 3 hour time frame for the Mini-Retreat. The Sessions from the Mini-Retreat can also be broken up into additional individual Sessions. This material could be used from start to finish or you can use different sections to supplement things you may have already planned. We realize each of our directors have different gifts; some are wonderful teachers, some are storytellers, others are better facilitating small groups, some are gifted in finding volunteers to present material. Use your strengths to lead your family sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team!

There are supplies that need to be pulled together to help bring these lessons to life. We have given you supply lists. We have also suggested ways to set a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead parents into deeper intimacy with Christ and themselves. The children's sessions always begin with gathering around a prayer table covered with different items for each lesson to help draw them into the experience. Depending on the size of the group, you may decide to break the group up into classrooms led by catechists and helpers. We cannot over emphasize the impact of simple but beautiful decor, great hospitality, and intimate prayerful spaces. Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you!

As a Church we are just beginning the journey of calling parents into the opportunity of forming their children and themselves more deeply. We realize parents are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written sessions we feel best take into account today's parents. The majority of the parents we encounter have very little theological background, but have the wisdom of their own lives to reflect on. We have found that when we give them helpful prompts and time to process, they do very well in sharing with each other. Parents, for the most part, are coming to these sessions because they've been told they have to, and probably aren't expecting anything that will truly impact their lives. It is our hope that these sessions meet them where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that families leave with a positive experience of Church and community, feeling like they have a place in it.

# SESSION 1

## PARENTS

*(To be used before Family Meeting 1. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Double Sided Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Table Image (1 per parent)
- Pens (1 per parent) ([Purchase Here](#))

### Set-Up:

- Group Table
  - Double Sided Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Table Image (1 per parent)
  - Pens (1 per parent)

## GATHER

Welcome to our first Session for *Nourish*! Thank you so much for making the time to be here! We know life is full and we value your time. We gather together to unite ourselves in Jesus and our community so we can all be inspired and supported as we work to help our children remain united to Jesus. The work is hard, but worthwhile, and we are all together in it.

We will be breaking our three Sessions into a Last Supper theme. The first Session we will reflect on the image of a table. In the second Session we will reflect on the image of a chair. Finally, in the third Session we will reflect on lifting our cups with Christs in the Eucharistic meal.

We begin with the table. One thing that separates us from animals is that we as humans stop to eat and enjoy meals, not worrying that predators may hurt us or steal our food in the process. Tables tell us that food is more than just fuel, it is also a time to connect with others. Time around a table enjoying a meal also feeds our souls.



## NOURISH SESSION 1 - PARENTS

Jesus shared many meals with others around tables enjoying conversation and fellowship. The final thing he did with his apostles before his death is referred to as “The Last Supper.” A meal around a table with those he loved very much. It is here he breaks bread and pours wine. The same way we receive his Body and Blood around a communal table, the altar, with those he also loves very much.

Tables represent many moments of our lives. You each have an image of a table, take a few moments to remember how you sat at dinner with your own family as a child. Write the names of your family members at the seats they each occupied when you were a child.

Now think about your current family. When you sit together at the table where do you each sit? Write names in these spots as well.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, thank you for the people we share life with, and for the blessing of time around a table with those we love. May we never take for granted the beauty of everyday ordinary life. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## REFLECT AND SHARE

Today we are not as centered around tables as the only place we connect and share meals. Oftentimes we are doing this in our cars, at restaurants, around a coffee table, etc., but for today we are using the table to represent gathering.

Everyone has a special spot at the table. A place only they can fill. No one is ever turned away from the meal and the chance to connect. This is important to Jesus as well. Each of us is included at his table, we have a spot only we can fill, and no one will ever be turned away. We may choose to leave the table, but we will never be excused.

Do our children know how special they each are to Jesus? How individually loved they are and how important their place is at Jesus’ table?

## NOURISH SESSION 1 - PARENTS

A table is a shared space with four legs to keep it upright. Without even one of the legs, everything would end up on the ground. You have been given a list of values and virtues. Look at these and choose four that are essential to your life as a family. Write each one of them next to a leg of your table. These “legs” are essential to your shared experience as a family. Each of them helps your family from disconnecting. Ask your children sometime what they think the legs of your family are.

Take a few moments to reflect and journal on the first set of prompts found on the back side of the values and virtues sheet. When ready, share your responses with your pod or small group (or the person sitting next to you).

**What are the four values or virtues you chose for your family?**

**Which one of these is the easiest to practice?**

**Which one do you need to work on more together?**

**What are ways you can tell your children of the special place they have at Jesus’ table?**

## TEACHING

Before meals we have the opportunity to say “Grace” together. To bless the food we are about to eat and the people we will share it with. Grace also makes us aware of the gift and blessing that a meal is. Not everyone gets the chance to enjoy a meal - let alone three meals a day. We say Grace as a thank you for this blessing. A blessing that we do not deserve more than others, but one that we have been given.

Jesus prayed a prayer over the bread and wine during the Last Supper. During Mass these words prayed by the priest, who acts in the person of Jesus, change ordinary bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is the word of God, through the priest, that transubstantiates the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. We call these words prayed during the Eucharistic prayer, the consecration.

Our words and conversations with our children can transform as well. Earlier we said it can be harder and harder for families to find their way around a table each day. With parents working, lots of after school activities, and busy schedules, we can struggle to have time to connect. It is essential to find ways to check in with each other about our days.

Take a few moments to reflect and journal on the second set of prompts. When ready, share your responses with your pod or small group (or the person sitting next to you).

## NOURISH SESSION 1 - PARENTS

How do you take time to acknowledge food as a blessing?

What is a grace you pray together? Who leads the prayer?

Do you have any other mealtime rituals?

What are some simple ways your family connects?

Do you have any particular questions you ask each other to check in?

In the rush of family life we also need to be intentional in connecting with our God. These connections give peace and purpose to our lives. Hopefully the *Nourish* Box will provide time for connection with your family and God.

## WITNESS

The Celtics had a term they used for experiences that gave them a taste of the divine. Where the distance between heaven and earth was merely a sliver. We too have these moments, very often with our own families, where we think “This is as good as it gets.” Jesus described heaven as a banquet - sitting at a feast, at a table enjoying a wonderful meal with those we love all present. Our tables and celebrations are a tiny taste of this. We get slivers! We will now hear from a member of our community about a time they have experienced this gift.

*(Have a witness share with the group about a time or memory that speaks to this.)*

## CLOSING PRAYER

The children are returning. Have them join you at your table. Have each person at your table say their name out loud to the rest of the group (parents and children).

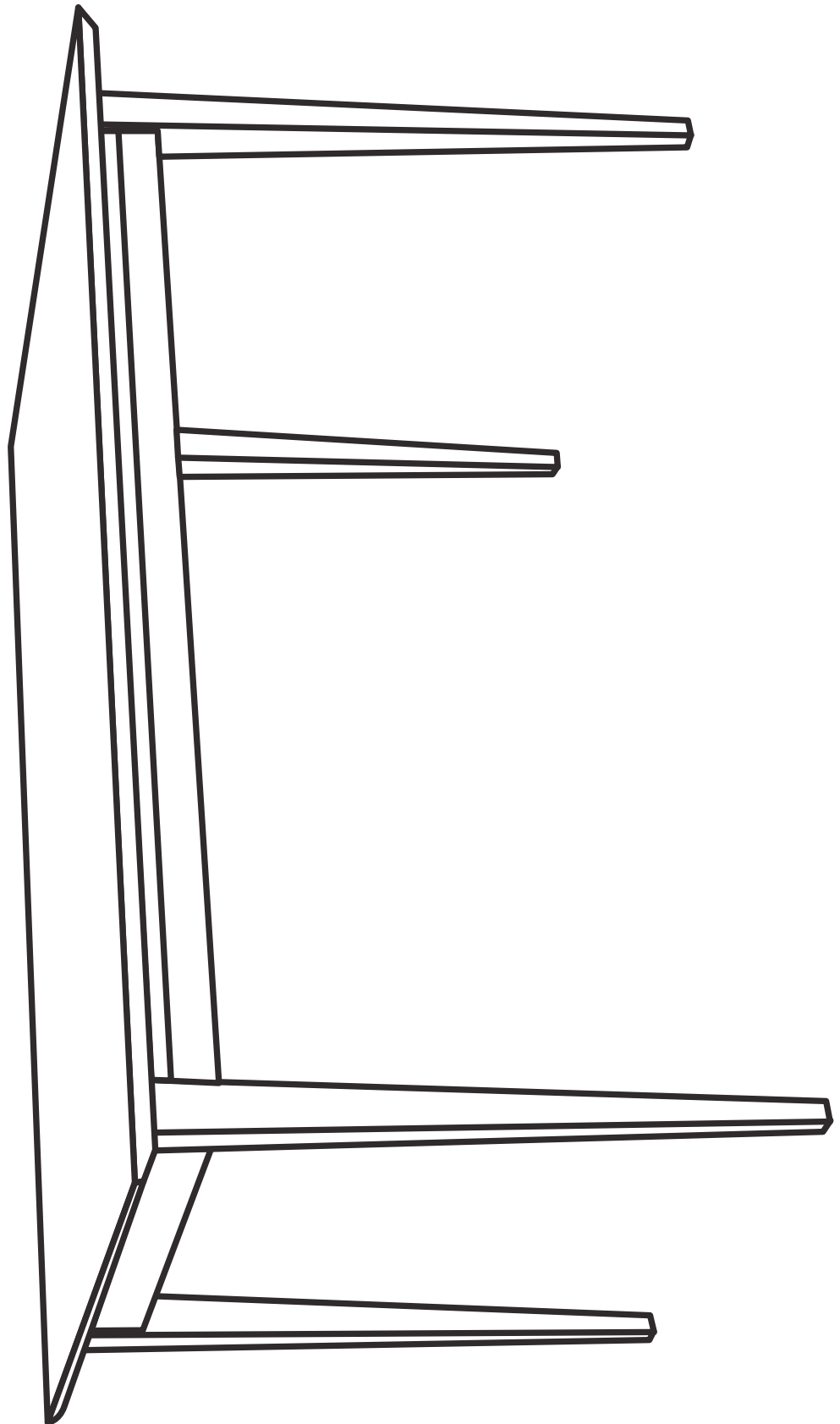
Let's stand and hold hands around each of your tables as a sign of our unity.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Jesus, thank you for the ways you bring us together. Your biggest miracle was around a table. It reminds us of how important these moments are. Slow us down God, and help us to gather more. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Take a moment to share the sign of peace with everyone at your table.



# VALUES AND VIRTUES

Acceptance	Generosity	Love
Authenticity	Gratefulness	Optimism
Boldness	Hard Work	Order
Character	Helpfulness	Patience
Commitment	Honesty	Peace
Compassion	Hope	Perseverance
Cooperation	Humility	Prayer
Courage	Humor	Relationships
Creativity	Independence	Respect
Dependability	Initiative	Self Control
Excellence	Integrity	Service
Faith	Joy	Simplicity
Flexibility	Justice	Teamwork
Forgiveness	Kindness	Unity
Friendship	Learning	Worship

## REFLECT AND SHARE

What are the four values or virtues you chose for your family?

Which one of these is the easiest to practice?

Which one do you need to work on more together?

What are ways you can tell your children of the special place they have at Jesus' table?

## TEACHING

How do you take time to acknowledge food as a blessing?

What is a grace you pray together? Who leads the prayer?

Do you have any other mealtime rituals?

What are some simple ways your family connects?

Do you have any particular questions you ask each other to check in?

# SESSION 1

## CHILDREN

*(To be used before Family Meeting 1. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDF
  - Get to Know Me a Skittle Sheet (1 per child)
  - Grace Table Tent (1 per child)
- Tables and Chairs (set up)
- Images of the Last Supper
- Mini Pack of Skittles (1 per child) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Markers ([Purchase Here](#))
- Bread (1 loaf per table plus some for the prayer table)
- Table Cloths (1 per table)
- Candles (1 per table)
- Lighters
- Platters (1 per table and 1 for the prayer table)
- Butter
- Grape Juice
- Pitcher (1 per table and 1 for the prayer table)
- Cups (1 per child) ([Purchase Here](#))

### Set-Up:

- Prayer Table
  - Pictures/Images of the Last Supper
  - Loaves of Bread on Platter
  - Grape Juice in Pitcher
- Group Table
  - Get to Know Me a Skittle Sheet (1 per child)
  - Grace Table Tent (1 per child)
  - Mini Pack of Skittles (1 per child)
  - Markers
  - Bread (1 loaf per table)

## NOURISH SESSION 1 - CHILDREN

- Table Cloths (1 per table)
- Candles (1 per table)
- Platters (1 per table)
- Butter
- Grape Juice
- Pitcher (1 per table)
- Cups (1 per child)

## GATHER

*(Gather the children around the prayer table to begin. On your prayer table have any pictures or images of the Last Supper, some loaves of bread on a serving platter, and some grape juice in a decorative pitcher.)*

Today we are going to be talking about a table and what it means in our day to day life. We also are going to be talking about a very special table in the Bible, that has a lot to do with us preparing to receive Eucharist.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray around this table to begin.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, thank you for bringing us around this table today. Does anyone have someone they would like to pray for today? (As the leader you can begin by naming someone who needs prayer and then invite the children to add other people.) God, we know that you are close to all those we mentioned. Bless our time together today. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## GAME

*(Depending on the size of your group. Have everyone take a seat around a table or many tables. Have this set up ahead of time. If possible, have a catechist or helper at each table.)*



## NOURISH SESSION 1 - CHILDREN

Here is an interesting fact: human beings are the only ones who eat their food at tables. All animals eat on the ground. If they are in the wild they eat their food very fast, worrying that another animal may come to take it from them. For animals food is fuel, it is a way to stay alive. Can you imagine if you came out to the school lunch tables and everyone was on the ground eating their food as fast as they could?

For humans, we mainly eat our food at tables and for the most part we do this as we are talking together. Eating food is more than just getting fuel in our bodies, it also provides time to spend with people we enjoy. Tables are a way for people to connect. We often tell stories about our day and laugh together around a table.

Tables are an important part of our family celebrations. We share our holiday meals around a table, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. We sing “Happy Birthday” around the table as someone blows out the candles on the cake.

*(For this activity each child will need a mini bag of Skittles and the printable PDF of the questions.)* We are going to play a game around our table called: “Get to know me a Skittle.” You will have a mini bag of Skittles and a sheet of paper with questions to share from. Pour out the bag of Skittles and share one or two responses for each color of Skittle you have.

## CRAFT

Another important part of the table is that meals are served here. Before we eat our meals we are invited to say “Grace.” A meal is a blessing, not everyone gets to have food each day. We pray Grace to remember this. It is a way of thanking God for providing for us today. It also reminds us to pray for those who will not have a meal like ours today.

Do any of you have a special grace you pray at your table at home?

We are going to make a table tent with two special meal time Graces on it. On one side is a traditional Grace and on the other we invite you to write your own, thanking God for the food you have been given for a meal. You can color it and then set it in the middle of your table at home.

*(Put out the supplies for this activity. It might be helpful to have the table tents cut out ahead of time. Cut along the solid lines. Have the children fold along the dashed lines to assemble. The base slit should act as a locking mechanism, but you may also tape the bottom together.)*

## NOURISH SESSION 1 - CHILDREN

This will remind you to thank God for the blessing of your meal, the blessing of the people you eat it with, and to pray for those who will go without a meal. You can be the person at your table to lead this grace. Sometimes parents are busy and overwhelmed, they will be so happy when you remember to lead your family in this prayer.

# TEACHING

*(Begin to transform the table. Put on a nice tablecloth, add some lit candles, and turn down the lights in the room a bit. Add the loaf of bread, pitcher of grape juice, butter, and cups.)*

I want to talk to you about a very important table in the Bible. Just before Jesus died he invited his disciples, his friends, to a special meal. He asked someone to go upstairs and prepare a table for all of them to eat together. They all knew each other and were good friends. They must have been laughing, telling stories, and talking about their day like we do around our tables. Everyone had a spot, no one was left out, just like at our tables.

Do you know any of the names of the people that might have been around this table? James, John, Peter, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Simon, Judas, James, Jude. There are so many famous paintings of this dinner. I am going to show you one that I found. *(Show them an image of the Last Supper.)* This meal at this table was known as “The Last Supper.” This was the last meal Jesus had before he died on the cross the next day.

Can anyone tell me what are some things Jesus did around this table? He took bread and blessed it and shared it with everyone. He took wine and blessed it and shared it with everyone.

Why did he do this? He knew he was going to die and would not be with them any longer in the same way. He wanted to give them a special way to continue to experience him. He tells them each time they gather around a table, pray a blessing, and share bread and wine, he will truly be present to them. He says: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

When we go to Mass we are gathered around the altar, another name for the altar is the Lord’s table. Each of us are included, everyone has a spot, no one is left out. The priest prays the same blessing that Jesus prayed at the Last Supper so we can experience Jesus like he told the apostles they would be able to way back when. We are a part of that Last Supper each time we participate in Mass. When you come up for Communion you are taking your seat at the Lord’s table.

## NOURISH SESSION 1 - CHILDREN

I am going to teach you a new word: “companis.” In Latin, a language that is used in the Church, the word “panis” means bread, and the word “com” means with or together. Companis mean to share bread together. Can you say: companis? This is where the English word companion comes from. Our companions are people we break bread with.

We are going to share bread together right now around our table. We are companions on the journey of faith. This is something they did all the time during Jesus’ life. You have a loaf of bread at your table, you are going to pull your piece off the loaf. There also is a bit of butter if you would like to add it. We also have grape juice that will be poured in your cup. This bread and juice remind us of the sharing of the meal at the Last Supper. While we enjoy this bread and juice we take a moment to remember that the Eucharistic meal we are preparing to receive will be so much more special when we receive Jesus’ Body and Blood.

*(Some questions to ask them:*

*Why do you think Jesus did this as his last experience with his friends?*

*Why would he use a table and a meal?*

*Does Jesus want to be close to us in our homes?*

*If Jesus was sitting with us, what questions would you want to ask him?*

*Who do you usually sit next to at your dinner table?*

*Is there a question you answer about your day and how it went while sharing dinner with your family?)*

I want to end our time together by telling you about one last table. When Jesus described heaven he talked about a big beautiful banquet that we would be at, to eat a feast at a table with all those we loved. That will really be a celebration. When we are sitting at the table with Jesus in heaven!

We are now going to go back and join our parents around their table for a closing prayer.

# GET TO KNOW ME

## *a skittle*

### Orange

- What is your favorite ice-cream flavor?
- What would you like to be when you grow up?

### Yellow

- What is your full name?
- Who is a famous person you would like to meet?

### Green

- What is a movie you never get tired of watching?
- What is something you like to play?

### Purple

- Do you have any pets? If so, what kind and what are their names?
- What is your favorite book?

### Red

- What is your favorite color?
- What is something you could eat every day?

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PERSONAL  
GRACE

TRADITIONAL  
GRACE

Bless us, O Lord,  
and these thy gifts,  
which we are about  
to receive from thy  
bounty, through  
Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

PERSONAL  
GRACE

TRADITIONAL  
GRACE

Bless us, O Lord,  
and these thy gifts,  
which we are about  
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Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

# SESSION 2

## PARENTS

*(To be used between Family Meeting 2 and 3. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Double Sided Personality Traits and Chair (1 per parent)
- Pens (1 per parent) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Index Cards (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Large Basket or Bowl

### Set-Up:

- Group Table
  - Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Double Sided Personality Traits and Chair (1 per parent)
  - Index Cards (1 per family)
  - Pens (1 per parent)
- Prayer Table
  - Large Chair
  - Basket or Bowl

## GATHER

Welcome to our second Session for *Nourish*! Thank you so much for making the time to be here! We know life is full and we value your time. We gather together to unite ourselves in Jesus and our community so we can all be inspired and supported as we work to help our children remain united to Jesus. The work is hard, but worthwhile, and we are all together in it.

Last time we gathered we talked about the image of a table and connected it to our experience of gathering, and the Lord's table. Today we are going to be looking at the image of a chair and what it represents. A chair and sitting represent being with someone. Jesus sat with others. People were very comfortable around him and found

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - PARENTS

him very easy to be with. They could be themselves around him. For our session we are going to be talking about this idea of sitting with others, and the example Jesus provides us.

# OPENING PRAYER

But first let us sit with Jesus as we open in prayer. (... indicates a pause)

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*I am going to ask you to close your eyes, and get comfortable in your chair...Let go of your lists and schedules - just be in this moment...Experience quiet and stillness...Do not fight it...  
Let it take over...Peace...*

*Now imagine Jesus pulling up a chair to sit with you...feel his presence next to you...He asks you about yourself, tell him what is going well for you...He smiles and listens...Now tell him about anything you are struggling with...Feel him reach for your hand...He knows sadness and disappointment...Hear him ask you about your parenting, share with him about life in your home...He asks you what you need from him, tell him....Now just be still and listen for his voice...What does Jesus say to you...Hear him as he prays for you...Allow yourself to slowly open your eyes and come back to this space.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# CHECK-IN

In *Nourish* Family Meeting 1 we learn the importance of gathering as a family in your home and as a community at Church. Your family is unique, special and holy, and set apart for a purpose, just like the Church. In Family Meeting 2 we learn about the importance of our daily actions and the opportunity to seek forgiveness when we make mistakes. Our God wants us to remain united to him and one another in love.

Let's take a few minutes to share your experiences with the Family Meetings you recently completed.

How did Family Meeting 1 and 2 go at-home? What went well? What was difficult?  
What did you and your family learn?

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - PARENTS

Today, we will do a few activities and some sharing to offer support as you move toward the next Family Meetings all about listening and responding.

# REFLECT AND SHARE

A chair is an image of a place to sit. Jesus sat with all types of people during his time on earth. His example shows us the power of being present to others. It also shows us the challenge of sitting with another who may be completely different than we are. He tells us to love others as we love ourselves.

We learn to love ourselves as we are, in the midst of our own brokenness. We, too, are called to love others in the midst of their brokenness. What does this call of radical love, and “sitting with” others look like for us and our families?

In front of you there is a sheet with a list of personality traits. Look over the list and circle the top five that describe you.

These answers reveal the positive, negative, and neutral attributes of who we are. Each of us will have some similarities and some differences with others. It is our differences that can frustrate us and keep us from one another.

On the back of the personality traits sheet you have an image of a chair. Take a moment and think of someone that you struggle with and write their name on the seat of the chair. In front of the chair, write some of the things that are different between you and that person. Now, write down some of the things that person may be going through or dealing with that might be difficult for them underneath the chair. Each time you “sit with” this person, these things are underneath every conversation you have. It is here where we must start to find empathy and understanding. Next, write down a few things you share in common with this person behind the chair.

We are the teachers and examples for our children, models of how to love, understand, and “sit with” others. We show our children how to view and interact with others, including those we find difficult to love.

Today’s world has us often looking at each other through our differences, rather than our similarities. Jesus tells us to look with eyes of love, to come from underneath, to focus on the good, and our shared commonalities. A good place to begin is to remember that we were all created good by the same God.

Take a few moments to reflect and journal on the first set of prompts. When ready, share your responses with your pod or small group (or the person sitting next to you).



## NOURISH SESSION 2 - PARENTS

What are two differences and two similarities you share with the person sitting in your chair?

How have you learned to focus on your similarities and love through your differences?

How can you use this chair analogy with your children to help them seek more understanding with others?

Jesus calls us to a deep, selfless love for others. He sacrificed himself out of complete acceptance and love for us. He took all our differences and brokenness on the cross.

## WITNESS

We are now going to hear from a member of our community about how they have come to love and understand someone who is difficult and how they have extended the grace of God to them.

*(Have a witness share an experience of loving and understanding someone who is difficult and how this is related to their relationship with God.)*

## TEACHING

When we receive Eucharist, we are united with Christ, which should change us. Jesus tells us: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (John 6:56). Receiving Eucharist, is to take Christ into us. To take understanding, compassion, humility, and forgiveness into our own lives, and then to give it away.

Sin separates us from God and one another. On the contrary, when we receive Communion it works to separate us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins. The Eucharist also strengthens our charity, which wears thin in daily life. By giving himself to us, Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to the world and root ourselves in him. Christ unites us to all the faithful in one body - the Church.

The Eucharist must also commit us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, both materially and spiritually. St. Paul reminds us:

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - PARENTS

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good. (Romans 12:15-21)

In the Jewish mourning tradition, there is a practice they call sitting "Shiva." For seven days people come and visit with the person that has lost someone. Family and friends come and sit next to them. They do not talk unless the person they are with begins the conversation. If a conversation is started they keep it centered in support of the person who is struggling, never around themselves. We, too, are called at times to just sit with others, to not have all of the answers, but to just offer our support of presence. To let them know, I am with you.

Receiving Eucharist should change us and our children. When we are united with Christ we become more like him each day. Let us be on the lookout for the fruit of Communion working through us as we sit across from one another.

Take a few moments to reflect and journal on the second set of prompts. When ready, share your responses with your pod or small group (or the person sitting next to you).

**Has anyone shared the gift of Shiva with you? Is there anyone in your life right now who needs to hear, I am with you?**

**How can you give your children the gift of Shiva, especially when we don't have all the answers or can't "fix" what they are in the midst of?**

**Who are the poor in your life that need your support and understanding?**

## CLOSING PRAYER

The children are returning to our tables. Please have them come next to you. Today we have all been talking about how we are called to live out Eucharist. Our children talked about how we are one of many. They made a mosaic and saw visually the difference between one small square and what can happen when you have many. It is certainly more beautiful, and also more messy! Ask them later about the statue they created, and try to duplicate it at home with some conversation.

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - PARENTS

We are going to close with a chance to pray for the many we love and care about. I would like each parent and child to write together on an index card the first name of someone who could use prayer. Also write a tiny bit about why they are in need of our prayers. Up front we have a large basket, please have the children bring up your prayer intention and put it in the basket. Children then please return to your parents.

Prayer is something we can do for others. A way to sit with them. To pray specifically for the needs of another does a few things. First, it makes us slow down to remember to notice the needs of others around us. It also makes us grateful for our own situations; such as the gift of life, health, and other blessings we may take for granted. Lastly, it asks us to trust God. To believe that God is always aware of all our circumstances, and is very close to those in need. Let us pray.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Please extend your hands towards our basket of intentions.

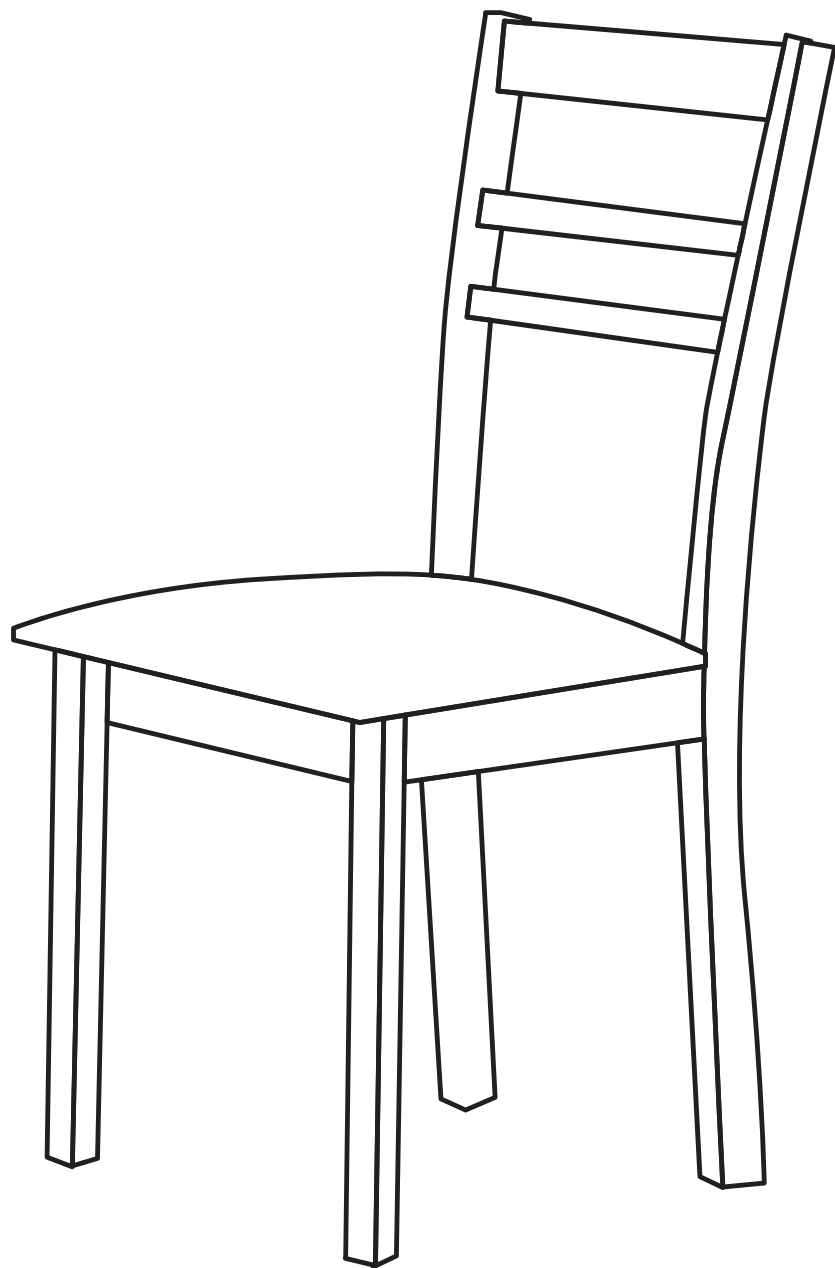
*Jesus, we pray for each name or situation written down in this basket. These all matter very deeply to the people in this room. We trust you with each person and situation mentioned. Jesus we know you saw sickness, death and so many difficult situations when you were on earth. Please be an understanding presence of love and healing to all. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

On your way out I would like you to come forward and take one intention out of the basket. Please put this somewhere in your home where you can see it. Do this right away when you get home. You may want to put it in a bowl on your dining room table, by a bedside table, etc. Each day find a quick moment to pray together as parent and child for this intention. This is a way to share the love of Jesus we talked about tonight with someone else.

# PERSONALITY TRAITS

Able	Fighter	Organized
Adventurous	Friendly	Pleasing
Ambitious	Fun-loving	Proper
Bossy	Funny	Proud
Brave	Gentle	Quiet
Bright	Happy	Reserved
Busy	Hard-working	Responsible
Cheerful	Helpful	Sad
Compassionate	Honest	Self-confident
Considerate	Humble	Selfish
Cooperative	Humorous	Serious
Courageous	Imaginative	Shy
Creative	Impulsive	Simple
Curious	Independent	Smart
Daring	Intelligent	Strong
Dark	Inventive	Studious
Demanding	Joyful	Successful
Determined	Lazy	Thoughtful
Disagreeable	Leader	Thrilling
Dreamer	Lovable	Timid
Energetic	Loyal	Tireless
Excited	Messy	Unselfish
Expert	Mischievous	Wild
Faith Filled	Neat	Witty



## REFLECT AND SHARE

What are two differences and two similarities you share with the person sitting in your chair?

How have you learned to focus on your similarities and love through your differences?

How can you use this chair analogy with your children to help them seek more understanding with others?

## TEACHING

Has anyone shared the gift of Shiva with you? Is there anyone in your life right now who needs to hear, I am with you?

How can you give your children the gift of Shiva, especially when we don't have all the answers or can't "fix" what they are in the midst of?

Who are the poor in your life that need your support and understanding?

# SESSION 2

## CHILDREN

*(To be used between Family Meeting 2 and 3. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Tables and Chairs (set up)
- Plastic Gloves (2 per child) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Bowl with Grapes (1 per table)
- Large Bowl
- Strainer ([Purchase Here](#))
- Sugar
- Pitcher
- Cups (1 per child) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Spoon (to stir)
- Mosaic Paper ([Purchase Here](#))
- White Cardstock (1 per child) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Glue ([Purchase Here](#))

### Set-Up:

- Prayer Table
  - Large Chair
  - Grapes
  - Mosaic
  - Large Bowl with Spoon
- Group Table
  - Gloves
  - Bowl with Grapes
  - Cups
  - Mosaic Paper
  - White Cardstock
  - Glue

# GATHER

*(Gather children around the prayer table. Have the following items on the prayer table: grapes, completed mosaic, large bowl with spoon.)* We have been talking about Eucharist throughout our Nourish at-home lessons. When we came together last time we talked about tables and how we eat our food around them and enjoy time with others. We talked about Jesus choosing to share a meal around a table with his disciples called the Last Supper. He left us that example to remember him. We talked about the table at Mass being called the Lord's table or altar where we receive Eucharist.

Today we are going to add another part to our table - a chair. What do we do in a chair? We sit, and usually by someone else. A chair is another sign of being together. We are going to use our time today to talk about Jesus' call for us to share in life with other people. When we receive Eucharist, we are united with the body of Christ. We are then called to live more like Jesus, to share our lives in communion with others. God created each of us as "one," but we are also part of "many." We were created to be with others.

# OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin our time together in prayer.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, today we are going to talk about living more like your Son, Jesus. Help us to be kind, understanding, and forgiving to others like he was. Also help us to do the right thing and stand up for others when we have the chance to. We want to be better, help us. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# ACTIVITY

*(For this activity each child will need a cup, a pair of gloves, and some grapes. You will also need a bowl to collect the juice, a strainer, and some sugar. The children will need to sit around a table.)*

Pull up a chair around a table. We are going to participate in a little experience.



## NOURISH SESSION 2 - CHILDREN

Wine is made out of what fruit? Grapes! The grapes grow on a vine, each grape is an individual little fruit, “one,” but it grows on a vine with lots of other grapes, “many.” When they make wine they take lots of individual grapes and mash them together. Years ago, when they didn’t have machines to crush grapes, they would put them in huge barrels and people would walk all over them and crush them with their feet.

We are going to crush some grapes! But not with our feet, with our fingers! Everyone needs to put on some gloves and pick a few grapes to put in the small bowl in front of you. I want you to use your hands to crush the grapes into a liquid into your cup, break up the skin too. Now I want you to each add your grapes to the others in the large bowl. These individual grapes are now one of many. You cannot find your original grapes - they have all been mixed together. When they get mixed together you can’t see which ones were smaller, or bigger, or bruised or shaped strangely. What you get instead is a beautiful drink to enjoy, that is a part of all the grapes coming together.

*(Now pour it through a strainer, add some sugar, and stir.)* We can add a bit of sugar and each have a small taste. *(Pour into a pitcher, then pour a little back into their cups and have them try the grape juice.)*

## TEACHING

We are made as individuals and we each have different things that make us uniquely ourselves. We are going to go around and tell me one thing you like about yourself.

We are also a part of a world that has “many.” God wants us to mix together in a way that we share all the pieces of each other to make something beautiful. He wants to bring together all kinds of people who look all different ways, and even speak different languages, have different interests, etc. into one. We call this the one body of Christ. Everyone that God created and loves is part of the many, but he desires us to be one.

For us to do this we have to love others despite our differences. When Jesus was on earth he spent time with all sorts of different people. He found a way to see the best in other people, and to always treat others fairly, he loves all people.

*(Set up a chair in front of the room for this example.)*

Let’s try something - I need someone to sit in this chair. Next I need someone to lay on the ground facing down, on your stomach, in front of the chair. Now the person in the chair needs to put their feet, both of them, on the person lying on the ground’s back.

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - CHILDREN

Now I need someone to stand straight and tall over the person in the chair with their hands firmly on the shoulders of the person in the chair. Now freeze like a statue all three of you.

We have three people here in three different positions. Who looks like they have the most power in this scenario? Who looks like they have the least amount of power? If this statue represents the world - what type of people would be standing, sitting, on the ground?

Now let's say this statue reflects your school classroom. What type of kid is standing, sitting, on the ground?

How can we remake this statue so that everyone is treated the same? (*See what they come up with. Bring two more chairs and sit in a circle together.*) When we are all at the same level we can begin to talk to each other. This is where we can see each other, start to understand each other, appreciate each other. We are going to talk about some different ways we can do that.

To begin, the person in the chair actually has the most power in this situation, they have the best chance to change this situation. Let's look at this more.

In a classroom, you may have said the person standing was the bully. There usually aren't many of those in a classroom. You may have said the person on the ground was someone who gets picked on. There is something about them that is different, that makes them a target. There are not usually many of them either. In the middle chair is everyone else. That means the majority of the children fall in this category. So the real power in numbers is here.

The only chance for the person on the ground is for the kids in the middle to decide to treat him better and in doing so stand up to the bullies. First the person in the chair has to take his feet off the person's back, he has to stop making fun of him and has to help him up off the ground. The people in the middle usually also have a better chance of understanding and feeling sorry for the person on the ground. Nothing will change unless they decide to do the right thing.

I want to tell you about a man in the Bible named Zacchaeus. He was a small man, and he was a tax collector. At that time he would not have been people's favorite. People didn't like him very much. He heard Jesus was going to be passing through his town one day. Being small, the only way for him to see Jesus on the road was to climb up into a tree. As Jesus passed by he saw him in the tree. Jesus never missed seeing those that

## NOURISH SESSION 2 - CHILDREN

“were on the ground.” He looked up at him and told him: “Zacchaeus I am going to come to your house today.” I am going to come and sit with you. This shocked everyone.

This is who Jesus wanted to spend time with, the one no one else wanted to.

When we receive Communion we are saying we want to receive Jesus, to have him “come to our house.” He sees each of us. It is not enough to just receive Communion, we have to live like he did. We have to do the right thing, treat others well, be a good friend, a good brother or sister etc. We are called to invite others into our house, bring them up off the ground, be forgiving, and seek to understand others. There is a responsibility in receiving Communion. We have to try to be more like Jesus.

Do you have any examples of how you have done things to be more like Jesus, or have you watched someone else be kind or fair, or do the right thing?

## CRAFT

*(For this craft each child will need a sheet of cardstock, some mosaic paper squares, and some glue.)*

We are going to make a mosaic right now. A mosaic is a picture made by arranging small pieces. In our lesson we were talking about the one. Like this little square of paper in front of me. But when I add - many, look what I can make. *(Have a sample of a mosaic image you made beforehand to show them.)*

At your table you have lots of little squares in lots of different colors, you can make one certain image of something or make something abstract with the colors everywhere.

We are going to go back now to see your parents and pray together.

# SESSION 3

## PARENTS

*(To be used between Family Meeting 5 and 6. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
- Pens (1 per parent) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Wine Glasses (1 per parent, glass or plastic) ([Purchase Here](#) or [Here](#))
- Drink (to fill glasses for toast, ~4 oz per person)
- Large Candles (2 for prayer table)
- Lighter

### Set-Up:

- Group Table
  - Small Group Question Sheet (1 per parent)
  - Pens (1 per parent)
  - Wine Glasses (1 per parent, filled)
- Prayer Table
  - Table Cloth
  - Large Candles

## GATHER

Welcome to our third Session for *Nourish!* Thank you so much for making the time to be here! We know life is full and we value your time. We gather together to unite ourselves in Jesus and our community so we can all be inspired and supported as we work to help our children remain united to Jesus. The work is hard, but worthwhile, and we are all together in it.

We have been using the image of a table and chairs set for a meal as we have been talking together about Eucharist. The Last Supper gives us a visual image of Jesus sharing a meal with his disciples. As they are gathering he breaks bread and pours wine. The next day Jesus becomes the sacrifice we celebrate at the Eucharistic meal. His death on the

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

cross is the sacrifice. The table now becomes an altar, a place where sacrifices happen, and every single Mass we are given his Body and Blood in Communion.

# OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray together.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Jesus, as we talk about transformation, help me to seek you more and myself less. More of your love, peace, faith, trust, and openness, and less of my own chaos, doubt, stubbornness, ego, and control. Please Lord, transform me, let me drink from your cup. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# CHECK-IN

In *Nourish* Family Meeting 3 we learn how reading, listening, pondering, and re-telling Scripture stories helps us to know and share our faith. In Family Meeting 4 we learn how to follow Jesus by making good choices, guided by the homily. In Family Meeting 5 we learn the connection between preparing for a meal in your home and preparing the altar to celebrate Jesus' sacrifice.

Let's take a few minutes to share your experiences with the Family Meetings you recently completed.

How did Family Meetings 3, 4 and 5 go at-home? What went well? What was difficult? What did you and your family learn?

Today, we will do a few activities and some sharing to offer support as you move toward the next Family Meeting all about how bread and wine transform into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

## REFLECT AND SHARE

Today we are going to reflect on the image of a cup. (*Hold up a cup.*) This cup is Jesus' cup and it belongs to anyone who calls themselves a disciple. We will be reflecting on three aspects of the cup today: holding the cup, lifting the cup, and drinking the cup. When we receive a cup from someone with a drink in it we trust that it is for our good. We trust they will not poison us, but that what is in the cup will refresh us and help us on our journey. The cup Jesus offers us is for our good, while it may not always taste good at the moment.

We begin by holding the cup. Holding the cup of life means looking critically at what we are living. This requires great courage, because when we start looking, we might be terrified by what we see. When we drink the cup without holding it first, we may simply get drunk and wander around aimlessly. Holding our cup confronts us with our radical aloneness. But it is also a wonderful challenge, because it acknowledges our radical uniqueness. We may be tempted to compare our cup to others, but no one wins when we compare. We must hold our cup and fully claim who we are and what we are called to live. The Church needs you, not a copy of someone else.

In each of our cups there is suffering. For each of us our sorrows are deeply personal. For all of us our sorrows, too, are universal. Jesus' cup is the cup of sorrow, not just his own sorrow but the sorrow of the whole human race. It is a cup full of physical, mental, and spiritual anguish. Who wants to drink it? It is the cup that Isaiah calls "the cup of God's wrath" (Isaiah 51:22). When the moment to drink that cup came for Jesus, he said: "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38). His agony was so intense that "his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44). In his immense loneliness, he fell on his face and cried out: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus didn't throw the cup away in despair. No, he kept it in his hands, willing to drink it to the dregs.

What are some of the sorrows in your cup? What do you need the courage and honesty to face in your cup right now? Do you feel like you hold this cup alone?

In the midst of the sorrows is consolation, in the midst of the darkness is light, in the midst of the despair is hope, and in the midst of the army of demons is the consoling angel. The cup of sorrow, inconceivable as it seems, is also the cup of joy. Only when we discover this in our own life can we consider drinking it. For anyone who has the courage to enter our human sorrows deeply, there is a revelation of joy, hidden like a

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

precious stone in the wall of a dark cave. The cup of life is the cup of joy as much as it is the cup of sorrow. It is the cup in which sorrows and joys, sadness and gladness, mourning and dancing are never separated. If joys could not be where sorrows are, the cup of life would never be drinkable. That is why we have to hold the cup in our hands and look carefully to see the joys hidden in our sorrows.

The cup of Jesus is also our cup. What Jesus lived, we would live. Jesus didn't want his friends to suffer, but he knew that for them, as for him, suffering was the only and necessary way to glory. The "cup of sorrows" and the "cup of joys" cannot be separated. We easily lose sight of our joys and speak of our sorrows as the only reality there is. We need to remind each other that the cup of sorrow is also the cup of joy, that precisely what causes us sadness can become the fertile ground for gladness. Indeed, we need to be angels for each other, to give each other strength and consolation. Because only when we fully realize that the cup of life is not only a cup of sorrow but also a cup of joy will we be able to drink it. Jesus, who participated fully in all our pain, wants us to participate fully in his joy. Jesus the man of joy wants us to be the people of joy.

What brings you the most joy that is also mixed in your cup? Where have you been able to see pieces of light in some of your dark places?

We then must lift up the cup. Lifting up the cup is an invitation to affirm and celebrate life together. As we lift up the cup of life and look each other in the eye, we say: "Let's not be anxious or afraid. Let's hold our cup together and greet each other. Let us not hesitate to acknowledge the reality of our lives and encourage each other to be grateful for the gifts we have received." We say to each other: in Latin, "Prosit" - be well; in English, "Cheers"; in Hebrew, "L'chaim" - to life. The best summary of all these wishes is, "to life." We lift the cup to life, to affirm our life together and celebrate it as a gift from God. When each of us can hold firm our own cup, with its many sorrows and joys, claiming it as our unique life, then too, can we lift it up for others to see and encourage them to lift up their lives as well. Thus, as we lift up our cup in a fearless gesture, proclaiming that we will support each other in our common journey, we create community.

Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. In community we say: "Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs; but we do not have to live it alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate the truth that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of a fellowship of mutual care."



## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

Lifting our lives to others happens every time we speak or act in ways that make our lives lives for others. When we are fully able to embrace our own lives, we discover that what we claim we also want to proclaim. A life well held is indeed a life for others. We stop wondering whether our life is better or worse than others and start seeing clearly that when we live our life for others we not only claim our individuality but also proclaim our unique place in the mosaic of the human family. So often we are inclined to keep our lives hidden. Shame and guilt prevent us from letting others know what we are living. We think: "If my family and friends knew the dark cravings of my heart and my strange mental wanderings, they would push me away and exclude me from their company." But the opposite is true. When we dare to lift our cup and let our friends know what is in it, they will be encouraged to lift their cups and share with us their own anxiously hidden secrets. The greatest healing often takes place when we no longer feel isolated by our shame and guilt and discover that others often feel what we feel and think what we think and have the fears, apprehensions and preoccupations we have. Lifting our cup means sharing our life so we can celebrate it. We need community, a community in which confession and celebration are always present together. We have to be willing to let others know us if we want them to celebrate life with us. When we lift our cups and say "to life," we should be talking about real lives, not only hard, painful, sorrowful lives, but also lives so full of joy that celebration becomes a spontaneous response.

Who am I able to authentically share my cup with? How can I work on not comparing my life to others?

Finally we are called to drink the cup. Drinking the cup of life makes us own everything we are living. It is saying, "This is my life," but also "I want this to be my life." Drinking the cup of life is fully appropriating and internalizing our own unique existence, with all its sorrows and joys. We gradually come to befriend our own reality, to look with compassion at our own sorrows and joys, and as we are able to discover the unique potential of our way of being in the world, we can move beyond our protest, put the cup of our life to our lips and drink it, slowly, carefully, but fully. Drinking our cup is a hopeful, courageous, and self-confident way of living. It is standing in the world with head erect, solidly rooted in the knowledge of who we are, facing the reality that surrounds us and responding to it from our hearts. True sanctity is precisely drinking our own cup and trusting that by thus fully claiming our own, irreplaceable journey, we can become a source of hope for many. By drinking it we will find our true freedom. Thus, we will discover that the cup of sorrow and joy we are drinking is the cup of salvation. We can only drink it when it is a cup of salvation. Thus the cup which Jesus was willing to drink, and which he drank until it was completely empty, became the cup of salvation. Drinking the cup of salvation means emptying the cup of sorrow and joy so that God can fill it with pure life. Living a complete life is drinking our cup until it is empty, trusting that God will fill it with everlasting life.



## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

We are going to spend a few minutes to reflect and journal on the following question. Then using the provided form, take a few minutes to write a toast you are willing to share with your pod or small group. We are going to each offer a toast, lifting up our lives, our sorrows and joys, for one another.

**What has been a deep sorrow in your life that when embraced has become a source of joy?**

**As a child of God I have carried the sorrow of \_\_\_\_\_. It has taught me \_\_\_\_\_. When I was able to embrace it I found the joy of \_\_\_\_\_.  
To life!**

We will now each share our toast with your small group. We will hold, lift, and drink to life.

## TEACHING

We have been using the image of a table and chairs set for a meal as we talk about Eucharist. The Last Supper gives us a visual image of Jesus sharing a meal with his disciples. The next day Jesus dies on the cross and becomes the sacrifice that is celebrated at the Eucharistic meal. The meal becomes the sacrifice. Jesus commanded the apostles to continue to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of him. Bread is transformed into the Body of Christ and wine becomes the Blood of Christ poured out for each of us. The table becomes an altar where the sacrifice is celebrated.

The name of the cup that is used for the sacrifice of the Mass is called a chalice. St. Paul tells us: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The Catechism tells us: The Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of Jesus. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering. (CCC 1368)

When we lift up our cups with Jesus', we are united with the sacrifice of Christ and also share in its effects. As the bread and wine are transformed, we too are changed, transformed, and given new life.

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

Take a few minutes to journal and reflect on the second set of questions. When you are ready, share your responses with your pod or small group (or the person next to you).

**What parts of your own life do you feel Christ can understand through his sacrifice?  
Have you ever experienced the transformational effects of the sacrifice of Christ in  
your life?**

**In what ways can you bring your family to Mass in a different way this weekend?**

This is the hope for all of us - death to resurrection, the promise of eternal life. This is what Jesus' sacrifice was ultimately for.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*(As the children come back, have them go and find their parents. Turn down the lights. Have a nicely covered table up front. Have two tall unlit candles on the table and a lighter. Ask everyone to please get quiet.)*

We end in the light. This light reminds us of Jesus' time on earth. He came as the light for the world. *(Have a parent come up and light the two candles. Have this assigned ahead of time.)*

We all talked about transformation, and the way Jesus calls us to this through the Eucharistic meal. The changing of bread and wine to his Body and Blood. Our children focused on bread in their session, and the ways God provided for his people through the Scriptures with bread, ending with the bread becoming his Son's own life. *(Have two children come up with a platter and a loaf or two of bread. Again, pre-assigned. Have them place it on the table.)*

Our parents focused on the cup. The cup that we too are asked to drink in our lives, Jesus took his final drink from this cup on the cross. *(Have a couple parents bring up their cups and place them on the table. Again, pre-assigned.)*

*(Now invite everyone to come around the table as best as possible.)*

Each time we come to this meal of bread and wine, we bring our own lives. As we watch the miracle of bread and wine transform into Jesus' Body and Blood, we too are being transformed. Our hearts are drawn even closer to his.

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - PARENTS

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, thank you for inviting us to your table, may we come here often to be transformed. (Have the parents place their hands on their child's head.) We pray especially for our children as they prepare to come to your table to receive Communion for the first time. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## REFLECT AND SHARE

What has been a deep sorrow in your life that when embraced has become a source of joy?

As a child of God I have carried the sorrow of \_\_\_\_\_  
It has taught me \_\_\_\_\_

When I was able to embrace it I found the joy of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To life!

## TEACHING

What parts of your own life do you feel Christ can understand through his sacrifice?

Have you ever experienced the transformational effects of the sacrifice of Christ in your life?

In what ways can you bring your family to Mass in a different way this weekend?

# SESSION 3

## CHILDREN

*(To be used between Family Meeting 5 and 6. Parents and children will be separated for the first part of each session.)*

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Coloring Page (1 per child)
  - Fish and Loaves Game Pieces (1 set per small group, printed on cardstock and cut-out)
- Loafs of Bread
- Platter
- Unconsecrated Communion Hosts
- White Paper Plates ([Purchase Here](#))
- Color Pencils or Crayons ([Purchase Here](#) or [Here](#))
- Picnic Basket or A Small Plastic Bowl (1 per small group) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Clothespins (7 per small group) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Tape (to mark the floor) ([Purchase Here](#))

### Set-Up:

- Prayer Table
  - Loafs of Bread on a Platter
  - Unconsecrated Communion Hosts

## GATHER

*(Gather the children around the prayer table where there is a loaf of bread, and some unconsecrated communion hosts.)* Today we are going to be talking about bread, what it means in the Bible, and what it has to do with us receiving Communion.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin our time together in prayer.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - CHILDREN

*Jesus, as we talk about bread today, we will hear about all the always you have taken care of those you love. Help us to remember that includes each and every one of us. Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# TEACHING

How often do you think you eat bread? Everyday? A few times a day? Bread has been an essential part of people's diets for a very long time. When Jesus was on earth they would gather around a table and enjoy bread. They did not slice it, but pulled pieces from the loaf.

Jesus actually compared himself to bread when he was teaching on earth. He told the people, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). In the Bible the word bread is mentioned almost 500 times. Let's look at three of the different ways bread is talked about in the Bible.

Way back in the Bible, before Jesus came to earth, the people who were trying to follow God were being held as slaves by the Egyptians. The Egyptian's leader was named Pharaoh. God's people had a leader named Moses. Moses begged Pharaoh to free God's people, but Pharaoh would not. The people cried out to God everyday to get them freed. Finally, God provided a way for them to escape. They left in the middle of the night and made it miles away from Egypt and ended up in the middle of a desert. Unfortunately they could not carry enough food with them to last very long. The people began to get very hungry and called out to God. They told him they would have been happier as slaves, because at least they had food, they did not want to starve.

God heard their hungry cries and he made it rain bread from heaven. Every single day, bread fell from the sky to feed them. God did this for 40 years. They called this bread manna.

We are going to play a game for a few minutes and then I am going to use the game to teach you more about God's bread from heaven.

We are going to make it rain bread in here for a little bit. Instead of real bread, our manna is going to be small white paper plates. Spread yourselves out throughout the room. After you have done that you each need to freeze in place. *(Have the leaders disperse the small paper plates all throughout the room.)* When I say go, you are going to safely pick up as many pieces of manna - plates - as you can. The winner will get a small prize.

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - CHILDREN

*(After all the plates are gone, have them each count how many they got. Award the prize. If this is a big hit for your group you can play another round or two.)*

*(Gather everyone back together.)*

I want to tell you more about God's bread from heaven. There was always enough for everyone to eat and no one had to fight for food like we just did. Since the beginning of time, God has cared for his people. He meets their needs, we call this providence. God did something supernatural, a miracle made this happen.

Another time in the Bible, which you should have talked about as a family using your *Nourish* box, God used bread again to take care of his people.

This time, Jesus was on earth, and everywhere Jesus went people came out to hear him talk about God, and hear his message about love and peace. On this day, thousands of people came out with their families. Before they knew it, the day was ending and everyone began to get hungry. Jesus' closest friends, the disciples, began to ask Jesus what they should do about feeding these people who were still pretty far away from their homes. The disciples told him they didn't have nearly enough food to give them. They only had five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus took what they had, looked up towards heaven, and blessed the food. The disciples then passed out bread and fish till everyone had eaten. They fed 5,000 that day. This is known as the miracle of the loaves and fish.

We are going to play a game about the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Did you know that Jesus asked the disciples to help him with this miracle? He wanted them to be a part of feeding others so he asked them for the little bit of food they had, five loaves and two fish, which he then blessed, broke, and gave it back to them to pass out.

*(Print the fish and loaves on cardstock and cut-out. Take clothespins and pin one on each game piece. This adds some weight to the game piece for when the kids throw it in the basket/bowl. Have the children line up and toss the game pieces of the fish and loaves into the basket, one at a time in their small group. Make a line on the floor using tape for a line. Make the distance between the children and basket far enough for it to be a challenge, but not too hard. The kid that gets the most fish and loaves in the basket is the winner.)*

In this story again God provides bread for his people and every person is taken care of by his providence. This time Jesus receives the offering from the disciples, holds it up and blesses it, before he passes it out to the people. A miracle happens to make this possible.

## NOURISH SESSION 3 - CHILDREN

The final story we will be looking at from the Bible is known as the “Last Supper.” This time, Jesus invites his disciples to enjoy a special meal with him. He has someone prepare a table for them to all sit at.

Jesus knows that this will be his last meal with the disciples, later that evening he will be unfairly accused and sent to jail. The next day he will be crucified on the cross.

As they are eating together he takes bread, holds it up, and blesses it, then gives it to each of his friends to eat. He tells them that when he is gone he wants them to do this same thing. To take bread and bless it and give it to others to eat. Each time they do this, he tells them he will be with them. He tells them this bread will become his Body and the wine his Blood. This is the most amazing miracle ever. Each time we go to Mass, the priest who is acting as Jesus, takes bread, blesses it, and gives it to us to eat. We call this Communion. We are present for the miracle.

In this story Jesus again feeds others with bread. He blesses the bread and there is enough for everyone. This happens through a miracle of grace.

God uses bread, something that we all need to be able to live, to compare himself to. He is telling us that he is something we each need to live for eternal life. We need his love, his kindness, his forgiveness inside of us. Each and every time we receive Communion, God is telling us he wants to take care of us. There is always enough for everyone. He wants to share himself with all of us. In receiving Communion we receive Jesus, the Bread of Life.

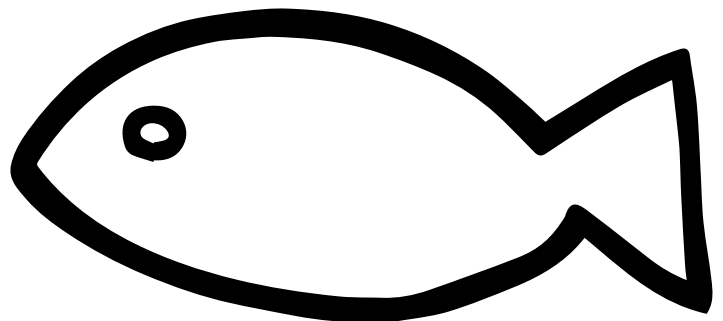
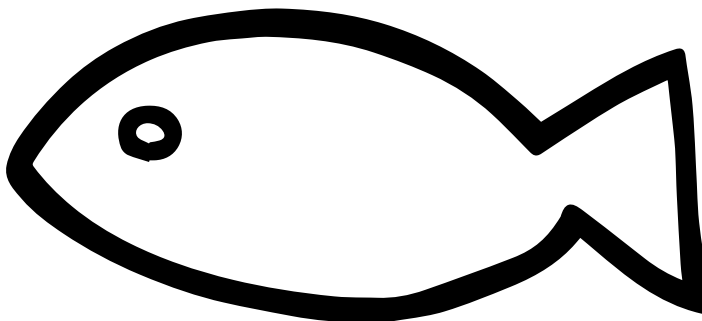
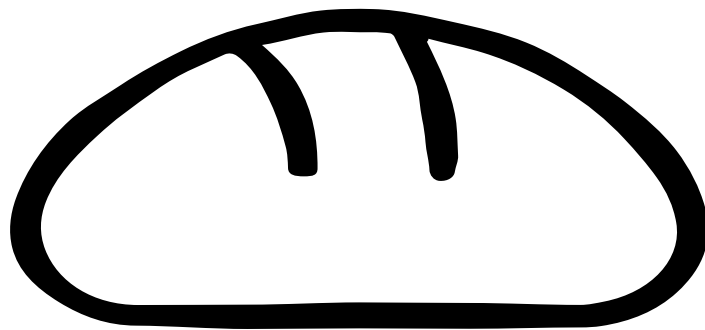
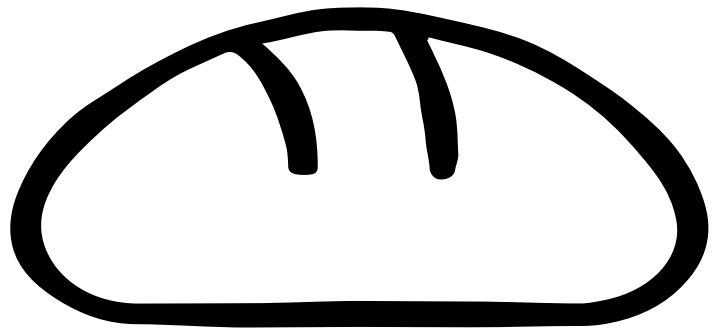
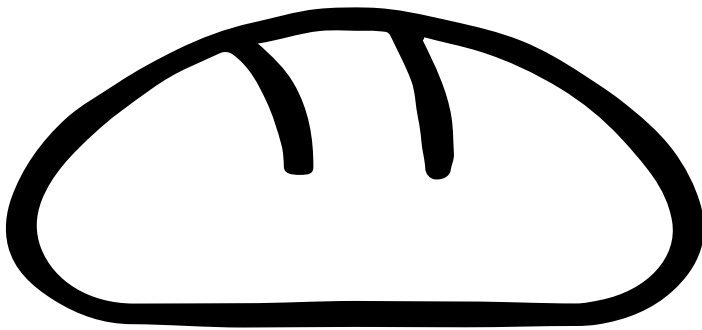
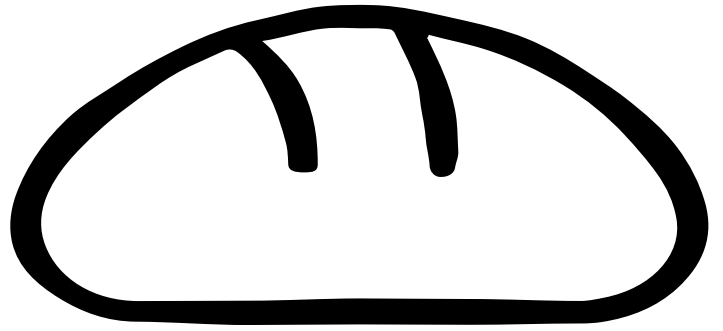
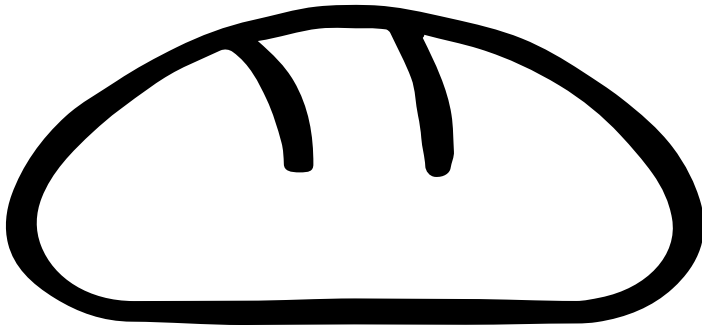
## CRAFT

*(The children will be coloring an image of the Eucharistic meal. You will need the printable PDF along with color pencils or crayons. Before they begin, ask them to tell you what each of the images mean. What do they know about bread and wine? What do they become? Have them color the illustration.)*

We are now going to return to our parents for the closing prayer. *(Make sure to have two children ready to bring forward the bread for the closing prayer.)*







# OUR GOD IS NEAR

## THEME

The activities, conversations, and prayer experiences will all be aimed at helping the families know and understand that Our God is near. He is a God of relationship. His greatest miracle is done in the midst of a family meal. He cannot be closer than when we receive his Body and Blood into our lives.

## GOAL

The goal of the *Nourish* Mini-Retreat is for parents and children to spend time together, surrounded by other families, experiencing God's love. Since the parents have been doing most of the faith formation with their children at-home, this is a chance for them to come and be led together in experiences with their child. Everything should be prepared with care so the families can just show up and be present.

Studies show that parents want their children to have positive experiences at-church. This retreat should be a positive experience at-church for both parents and children. They should leave feeling their time was well spent, and that they shared engaging faith experiences with their children.

## SUPPLY LIST

Please find any necessary supply lists at the beginning of each Session.

# SET-UP

Prepare the space for the day to look inviting. Have all tables and chairs set-up ahead of time and all supplies out where needed. Have a microphone or sound system tested and ready to go. It is nice to have kid friendly Christian music playing as people arrive, it adds a sense of gathering.

This retreat is written in modules. You can use all the modules from start to finish, or add two or three to something you have already planned. We realize everyone has different time allotments for their retreat, so again use the modules as your time allows.

# SNACK

It is nice to provide a snack time or possibly a small meal. This provides a time for building community as well. Also have drinks on-hand.

# SAMPLE AGENDA

The times below are estimates, based on a 3 hour time frame. Think about the size of your group and make adjustments. If your group is large, think about breaking into two smaller groups and switching back and forth for a few of the activities.

- Gather - 20 minutes
- A God Who Wants to Be Near - 45 minutes
- A God Who Walks With Us - 30 minutes
- A God Who Is Close To Our Needs - 20 minutes
- God's Open House - 45 minutes
- Eucharist Talk and Rehearsal - 20 minutes

# INTRODUCTION

### Supply List:

- Printable PDF
  - Welcome Instructions
  - Blessing Instructions
  - Our God is Near Sign
- Plastic Frames (1 per print) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Tablecloth
- Loaf of Bread
- Grapes
- A Large Goblet or Cup
- A Few Chairs Around the Prayer Table (as if it is a dinner table)
- A Large Bowl of Holy Water
- Slips of Paper

*(As parents and children arrive, have a prayer table prepared with a tablecloth and the following items: loaf of bread, grapes, a large goblet or cup, a few chairs around the table as if it is a dinner table, a bowl of Holy Water. As families check in, have small slips of paper, a bowl of holy water, and the printable PDFs with the instructions and theme sign on a table. It is nice to frame these prints if possible. Have each person write their name on a slip of paper and place it in the goblet/chalice. Then, have them bless each other on the forehead with Holy Water by making the Sign of the Cross, and saying "God is near." Have a volunteer close by to help with this.)*

# GATHER

### Supply List:

- Mini Can of Playdough (1 per person) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Small Plate (1 per person) ([Purchase Here](#))

*(After all families have arrived, gather them together in your meeting space. At another table up front, have cans of playdough, in all different colors. Have everyone come up and get a piece of playdough and a small plate. Each person in the family needs to have a different color of play dough.)*

You each have one color of playdough to mold into something that describes you; something you like to do, something you like to eat, something important to you, etc.

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

For example: a soccer ball, a piece of pizza, a flower, etc. You can mold it onto the plate if that helps. After finishing, share your sculpture with your family. Now, take all of your family's creations and squish them together into a ball, mixing the colors together. This is what family is like. We each have our own personalities and interests (like the one color we started with), and we are mixed together with other colors and personalities (parents, children, brothers and sisters). Sometimes we mix together easily, and other times it can be very difficult, but we get some spectacular color combinations from our coming together. There is such beauty and love that comes from family.

Now I want to show you what the Church is meant to be like. Please bring all your family dough balls forward. (*As the leader, take all of the balls of playdough and mix them into one huge ball.*) We call the Church the Body of Christ. The mixing up of color combinations from many different families coming together as one. We are many families with one God. We are a family of families. When we come together we become something beautiful and experience the love we were made for as well! This is God's hope for us; to enjoy one another, learn from one another, and support each other.

## PRAYER

Let's take this image into our opening prayer.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*God, thank you for bringing us together today, and for calling us into one big family with you at the center. Thank you for our little families, too, and how you picked just the right people for each of us. Help us to feel you near today as we experience the love and hope in this room.*  
*Amen.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

# A GOD WHO WANTS TO BE NEAR

## Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Miracle Worker Sheet (1 per table)
- Poster/Butcher Paper (a long roll) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Crayons and Markers (all colors) ([Purchase Here](#) or [Here](#))
- White Sheet of Paper (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Small Paper or Plastic Bowl (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Water Bottles (a couple per table to pass around)
- Navy Blue Sheet of Paper (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- White Crayons (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Candle (1 per table) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Lighter (1 per table) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Pens (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Tape ([Purchase Here](#))

## Set-Up:

- Group Table
  - Markers
  - White Sheet of Paper (1 per family)
  - Navy Blue Sheet of Paper (1 per family)
  - White Crayon (1 per family)
  - Paper or Plastic Bowl (1 per family)
  - Candle (1 per table)
  - Lighter (1 per table)

Today we are excited to have this time together to enjoy community with other families, to spend special time with our own family (parents and children), and to have God right in the center of all of it.

The theme of our retreat today reminds us of this: Our God is Near. We will be talking about the gift of the Eucharist and God's closeness to us through this sacrament. We also are going to have some fun today, talk about important things, eat snacks, and make things - all surrounded by God's love for us.

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

Invite the families to be seated at tables, if they aren't already. We are going to begin our time together by looking back at God's relationship with his people all the way from creation until the Last Supper and death of Jesus on the cross. I am going to need your help with some things as I tell you about God's love story for each one of us.

We are going to begin, at the beginning. We are going to look at God as he begins creating the world way back when. In Genesis, it tells us how God created the world. He used his voice. He spoke things into existence. He said, "let there be light," and then there was light. He said, "let there be water," and then there were rivers and oceans. For six days God created the earth and when he was finished he said that it was "good."

Around the room you will see a long piece of drawing paper (butcher paper roll) laid across tables, along with lots of crayons and markers. *(You can also tape the roll along a wall.)* You are invited to begin drawing and coloring some of the things God created on those first 6 days: plants, animals, rivers, thunder, and lightning, etc. Find your spot and begin to create. *(Let this go for approximately 5 minutes.)* Now let's each take a minute to look at all the things God created. *(Have the families walk around the creation drawings, and remind them that God said all of this was "good.")* Have everyone return to their tables.

But God wanted more, he wanted to interact with his creation. So God created his best project yet - people, human beings. And he said they were not just "good," they were "very good." What were the names of the first two human beings? Adam and Eve.

God created a beautiful garden for Adam and Eve to live in. He walked with them through the garden and told them they could enjoy all of it, but that they could not eat the fruit from one tree, the tree of good and evil. Adam and Eve had everything they needed to be happy, but they wanted more. The devil, disguised as a snake, talked them into eating the fruit. He told them they would not be satisfied following God. Adam and Eve turned from God - and sin and evil were brought into the world. God then had them leave the garden. This feeling of distance was created by sin.

This begins a long history of God trying to love and lead his people from a distance. God chose many different leaders on earth who he used to love and lead his people from afar. I am going to have you help me talk about some of these leaders by participating in a few activities.

The first person chosen by God was a man named Noah. Noah was a good man who listened to God's voice. He told the people about how much God loved them. Unfortunately the people didn't listen to Noah. They struggled to get along with each other, and they could not live in peace and goodness.



## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

Using a piece of white paper from your table I would like each family to draw a picture of what they think the earth looked like when Noah was alive. Use the markers for this. After you have finished, I want you to fold up your picture and put it in the small bowl on your table in front of you.

God saw that the people were not listening to Noah and he decided to do something to the earth, he flooded it with water. It rained and poured and covered every bit of land. Now pass around the water bottle on your table and pour some of it over your pictures in the bowl, until they are soaked. That is what happened to the earth.

God saved Noah and his family. Noah had built an ark and brought all kinds of animals on it. He and those who listened to him were safe on the ark. Eventually the land dried out and Noah and his family and the animals returned to the earth. God told Noah that he would never ever destroy the earth like that again.

And the earth became populated with people again. God loves these people, but he still seems very far away, and before too long they begin to argue, fight, and disobey again. So God chooses another leader to help him out. This time he chooses a good man named Abraham. Abraham heard God's voice and he told him that he is going to be the leader of many, many people.

Right now I need you to help me show you how many people Abraham would lead. On your table there are some blue pieces of paper and white crayons. I need each family to draw as many stars in the sky as possible in 1 minute. Okay, go!

Now I need all the children to come up front with their paper and stars and hold them up. God told Abraham to look up at the sky, count the stars in the whole sky, and that is how many people he would lead. When Abraham looked up it was too many to count! All the stars you drew today and many many more were up in the sky.

*(Have children sit back down.)*

But soon the people would no longer listen to Abraham and they returned to their old ways. And the earth was in chaos again.

But God didn't give up, he wanted his people to know how much he loved them and he wanted them to understand how to live together in kindness and love. So God chose another good man named Moses to lead his people.

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

God decided to talk to Moses in a very peculiar way. In the center of your table you have a candle and a lighter. Have a parent at each table light the table's candle. God came to Moses in fire. He talked to Moses through a bush that was burning right in front of him. He called him back to Egypt to help free his people from slavery and bring them to the promised land. As the chosen people were being prepared in the desert, God gave Moses a set of rules to help the people live better together. There were 10 of them. Does anyone know their name? 10 Commandments. God thought this would help the people understand his love and how to love each other. Moses tried to lead the people with these commandments. They still didn't know God personally so they had a hard time obeying his commandments. Pretty soon they were frustrated and fighting again.

God saw that things weren't where he wanted them to be with his people on earth. So he made a really big decision, a huge decision! God decided instead of being far away, that he would come near to his people. God chose two wonderful people, a man and a woman, to be a part of his plan. The woman's name was Mary and the man's name was Joseph. Through Mary's yes and Joseph's support they helped bring the Son of God to earth through little baby Jesus. God was with the people. Jesus was born! Merry Christmas! Let us stand and sing together a bit of Silent Night as best we can.

So now Jesus was on the earth. And Jesus was in a family and had friends and helped Joseph, his father on earth, build things in his workshop and he played and he laughed and he cried just like us.

As Jesus got older he began his mission on earth. He taught people all about God the Father and how he wanted to be a part of their lives and how much he loved and cared for them. He also was the perfect example for how to treat others. Jesus listened, he was kind, he was forgiving, he was gentle, and was peace-filled. The people loved to be with him! They followed him all over to hear him talk about God and his love for them.

Jesus also worked all kinds of special miracles while he was on earth. At your table can you all work together to think of five of Jesus' miracles and write them down on the sheet of paper that says "Miracle Worker." *(Give them a few minutes to write down their thoughts.)*

These miracles showed the people that he was God. No one else could make these kinds of special things happen. Let's tape these miracle lists up next to God's original incredible miracle, the one we call creation. Making something out of absolutely nothing! *(Have them tape their lists to the creation mural.)*

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

But as the people fell more and more in love with Jesus there were people in charge at the time who became very jealous of Jesus. They thought Jesus was getting too much power, so they decided they needed to get rid of him, even though Jesus never cared about having earthly power.

The night before he was to be unfairly arrested, Jesus decided to have a last meal with his friends. Now for this part of God's love story we need to go over to the Church. (*Or you can make an altar out of a table and have a tabernacle present in your space.*)

(*Gather all the families close around the altar. Bring them very close!*) Jesus gathered his friends around a table like this one we are gathered around. He was so close and so near to them, sitting right next to them. The God who is near! During the meal he broke bread and blessed it and then he poured wine and blessed it and shared it with all of them. He told them they needed to continue to do this, to share bread and wine around a table, and that he would be with them in a very special way.

The next day Jesus was crucified on the cross. His death made sure we would never be separated from God and it took away the sins of the world going all the way back to Adam and Eve. This table we are all around is the altar where we celebrate this sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus' life for ours. And now at this altar the bread becomes Jesus' Body and the wine becomes his Blood. This happens at every single Mass. As the priest prays the Eucharistic prayer, which are the words of Jesus, the word of God changes bread into his Body, and wine into his Blood, it is a miracle. The same as how God's words created the miracle of creation and Jesus' words worked miracles that healed people and gave people their sight back. God's words can transform things.

We are each invited to receive his Body and Blood during Communion. Each time we do, the most beautiful thing happens. The God of the universe comes so close, so near, that he resides in us, we take him into ourselves. The closest he could ever be. That is why Communion is so special!

Now I want to end God's love story by taking you to another area in our Church. This special spot is reserved for the Blessed Sacrament. That is what we call Jesus' Body that has been Consecrated, changed from bread to his Body. If there are any hosts left over from Communion, the extra pieces are kept in this very special place. Jesus is present in a very special way in this holy spot. You know he is with us, because there is a red light that is always on to remind us. There is a place like this in every single Church. It is a great place to visit for a few moments and sit and pray and be close to Jesus.

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

Now let's go back in our heads to the story of Moses in the desert, when I was telling you about how the people felt far away from God.

The voice of God had told them that wherever they traveled and wandered, which they did often, they needed to always take a special tent with them that would remind them of him. The word tent in Hebrew is pronounced "tabernacle." This special spot that we keep Jesus in Church is also called the tabernacle. It is the special place where Jesus is. After you receive Communion you too become a living tabernacle, because Jesus is living in you.

I have our cup from our prayer table this morning filled with each of your names. I am going to leave these with Jesus (set cup by tabernacle). I will leave each one of your names very close to him.

We are so blessed to be able to come to Mass and be part of this beautiful love story God has been writing since the beginning of time. The God who longs to be near to us.

## A GOD WHO WALKS WITH US

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Walk Questions ½ Sheet
- Water Bottles
- Individual Snacks

We are going to participate in a special activity as parents and children. First I am going to share a story with you, and then you will have some time to talk about it as you go on a small walk together.

In the Bible there is a story about two of Jesus' followers who left Jerusalem after he had been killed. They were walking on a road together, towards a town called Emmaus. They were sad and frustrated about what had happened to Jesus. They had lost their leader.

As they were walking and talking, a stranger joined them on the road. He began to ask them about themselves and what had been going on. They told him about what had happened to Jesus. He listened carefully to them. They also told the stranger about what they heard about the experience at the tomb, and how Jesus' body was not there. The stranger then began to share the Scriptures with them.

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

When they arrived in Emmaus they asked the stranger to stay with them. They sat down to a meal, and during dinner the stranger took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment they realized this stranger who had joined them was Jesus risen from the dead. It was in the breaking of the bread that their eyes were opened. In that moment they knew it was Jesus.

Each time we gather at the Eucharistic table Jesus invites us to have eyes of faith. To see him present in the breaking of the bread. The moment the priest lifts the host up and prays the blessing is such an important, holy time. It can be hard to stay focused all the time at Mass, but try and really watch for this holy moment. You can say quietly to yourself “Jesus you are here with me.”

We have some questions for parents and children to talk about as they walk together. You can take a water bottle and a small snack. Please meet back here in about 20 minutes.

*(Walk Questions:*

*If Jesus was to join you today as you walked and asked you how you were doing, what would you say? What is going well for each of you? What is difficult?*

*What questions would you like to ask Jesus?*

*Do you believe it is truly Jesus’ Body we receive in Communion?*

*Is it easy or hard for you to have faith, to believe in something or someone you can’t see? Talk about a time you knew Jesus was with you.*

*How do you feel about receiving Jesus for the first time? Parents also share how you are feeling about your child receiving Communion.*

*Do you have any questions or concerns?)*

## A GOD WHO IS CLOSE TO OUR NEEDS

### Supply List:

- Printable PDF
- Prayer Slips
- Plastic or Glass Bowl (1 per family) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Glue ([Purchase Here](#))
- Tissue Paper (to glue on) ([Purchase Here](#))
- Other Craft Embellishments (stickers, gems, etc.)
- Markers, Crayons, Paint ([Purchase Here](#) or [Here](#))
- Paint Brushes (if you are using paint) ([Purchase Here](#))

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

We are going to participate in a craft right now that will remind us of Jesus' closeness to us in our prayers. We talked about how Jesus blessed the bread and wine at the Last Supper. He lifted them up towards his Father in heaven.

We are each going to make a family blessing bowl for us to use to offer our prayers to God in our homes. We will decorate our bowl today and cut out and color some prayer slips. We can fill out a few of our prayer slips as well. At home we can put our blessing bowl on a small prayer table, or any table, with the prayer intention slips nearby. We can periodically fill out a prayer intention slip and put it inside the bowl, and bring our prayers to Jesus. Each time we pass our blessing bowl we can remember that God is near, and ask him to bless us, others, and situations that need his healing or care.

Each time we come to Mass we offer our prayers in a similar way. Before the "Collect," one of the first prayers we pray as Mass begins, the priest pauses to collect all our prayers and offer them to the Father. After the Creed, we pray together the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful. We pray for the sick, for those who have died, for our country and its leaders, for the poor and homeless etc. We are basically reading those slips that represent the prayers of everyone in the Church. Finally, at the offertory we usually offer a monetary donation in a basket, but we are also invited to offer our hearts and our prayers, uniting them to the sacrifice of Christ in the consecration.

As we end, let's have each family come forward and read aloud one of the prayer intentions from their bowl. After each is read we will all answer, "God, you are near."

If you have a chance, periodically make a visit to Church and leave some of your prayer slips by Jesus in the tabernacle. Take a few moments and sit close to him.

## GOD'S OPEN HOUSE

### Supply List:

- Printable PDFs
  - Station Sheets
  - Passports (1 per family)
- Plastic Frame (1 per station)
- Pens (1 per family)
- Items for Stations (listed in the set-up of each station)

## NOURISH MINI-RETREAT

*(You will be setting up various stations in the Church for families to visit that have to do with the celebration of the Mass. You can use all 16 included, or choose those you find most helpful. You can frame the printable PDFs or simply lay them by the object or area they are describing. Consider having some volunteers stationed around the Church to direct families to stations and answer any questions about your unique space. Be sure they are prepared. If there is anything special or specific to your Church, including a statue of your patron, be sure to point it out to the families.)*

Today we are excited to welcome you into God's house. For thousands of years people have built spaces to worship, honor, and spend time with God. Some of the oldest cathedrals took many lifetimes to finish. They were built with incredible love and hard work. One time a man who was building a window in a Church stopped and carefully carved a small bird underneath a ledge. Someone asked why he carved the bird where no one will notice it, He confidently answered, "God will see it." Churches are meant to be a home, rather than a museum. A place to spend time with someone you love, who loves you right back! Churches are sanctuaries. The word sanctuary comes from the sancta, which means holy. The Church is set-apart from other spaces for holy things. When we enter it we are welcomed with the sacred, peaceful, presence of God. In this house things are beautiful and well taken care of. There is an attention to detail. There are lots of different signs and symbols inside that have been passed down for many, many, years. Today we are going to give you a chance to look closely at many parts of our Church and the different objects used during Mass.

There are 16 different stations set up all around the Church. At each station there is something to look closely at and a description for you and your parents to share together. Throughout the Church we have a few of our volunteers present to answer any questions you may have. You do not need to visit the stations in any particular order, just make your way to each of them. You will have a "God's Open House Passport" that tells you what stations to visit. As you visit them, check it off your passport. Please be quiet and respectful, others may come in and out to pray as we are here. Please do not run, and if possible let's keep distractions minimized, including cell phones, this will help us all be more present to this experience. After you finish visiting all the stations, take some time to sit and be with God.

Let's get started.

## ALTAR AND MISSAL

**Set-Up:**

- Place a missal on the altar and open it to the propers for the coming Sunday along with the printable PDF.

## VESTMENTS

**Set-Up:**

- In the sacristy, lay out or hang up an alb, a stole and a chasuble along with the printable PDF.

## LITURGICAL COLORS

**Set-Up:**

- Also in the sacristy, lay out a stole in each liturgical color along with the printable PDF.

## AMBO AND LECTIONARY

**Set-Up:**

- Place a lectionary on the ambo and open it to the readings for the coming Sunday along with the printable PDF.

## POSTURES OF PRAYER

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF on one of the pews.

## BAPTISMAL FONT

**Set-Up:**

- On the main baptismal font or one by a door place the printable PDF.



### SINGING

**Set-Up:**

- Set out some music books in the choir area along with the printable PDF.

### CRUCIFIX

**Set-Up:**

- You can place the printable PDF near the sanctuary crucifix or set out the processional crucifix with the print.

### CANDLES

**Set-Up:**

- You can place the printable PDF near any candles. It may be nice to light the candles if they are not already.

### VESSELS

**Set-Up:**

- Place a paten or chiboria and a chalice on the credence table along with the printable PDF.

### STATIONS OF THE CROSS

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF below the first station.

### PRESIDER'S CHAIR

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF on the presider's chair.

## STATUES AND ART

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF near an area with art or near a statue of your patron.

## HOLY OILS

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF near the amby or oil niche.

## PASCHAL CANDLE

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF near the Paschal Candle

## TABERNACLE

**Set-Up:**

- Place the printable PDF near the tabernacle.

## EUCHARIST TALK WITH REHEARSAL

If possible, see if your parish priest can come and talk to the group about Eucharist and what that looks like for the children receiving the sacrament for the first time. This also provides a few moments to go over any particulars for the upcoming first Communion Day.

*(Take some time to rehearse the mechanics of receiving Communion at your Church. If you will be having them taste an unconsecrated host, it can be good to say: "This is bread" to which they can respond rightly, "Amen," which means yes, it is so. This will prepare them to know the difference between the host before and after consecration.)*

## CLOSING

*(Gather the families together for any announcements you may have.)*

Thank you for being here today. It was wonderful to watch you interact together as parents and children. I certainly felt that God was very near.

I wanted to close our time together by sharing with you a few lines from a meeting Pope John Paul II had with a group of children who had just received their first Holy Communion. The Pope is the most important leader in our whole Church, and this is what he had to say to the children on their special day. Listen closely children...

“Dear Children! The Pope comes to you today to tell you in the name of the Lord Jesus that he loves you. And I want to say it once more so that you will remember this happy news all your lives.....Jesus loves you!”

And now children I would like to ask you to share that good news with your parents. Please turn to them and tell them that Jesus loves them.

Go in peace as families, knowing that Our God is Near.

OUR  
GOD IS  
NEAR



NOURISH

# WELCOME

Write your name on a slip of paper and place it in the goblet/chalice.

# BLESSING

Bless one another on  
the forehead with Holy  
Water by making the  
Sign of the Cross.

# MIRACLE WORKER



NOURISH

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## WALK QUESTIONS

If Jesus was to join you today as you walked and asked you how you were doing, what would you say? What is going well for each of you? What is difficult?

What questions would you like to ask Jesus?

Do you believe it is truly Jesus' Body we receive in Communion?

Is it easy or hard for you to have faith, to believe in something or someone you can't see? Talk about a time you knew Jesus was with you.

How do you feel about receiving Jesus for the first time? Parents also share how you are feeling about your child receiving Communion.

Do you have any questions or concerns?

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Do you have any questions or concerns?



**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

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**I Pray For:**

# ALTAR AND MISSAL

The altar is the holy table upon which we celebrate the Lord's Supper. It functions as both altar of sacrifice and banquet table for the Eucharist. When the Eucharist is celebrated the table is covered with an altar cloth. The Roman Missal is the book containing the prayers, chants, and instructions for the celebration of Mass.

It can be used on and off the altar.



# VESTMENTS

Vestments are the special clothing worn by those who lead the assembly in prayer and add beauty to the celebration. The priest wears a long white garment called an alb, which means "white." Over this, the priest puts on a colored stole, which represents his authority, and chasuble, which means "little house."

# LITURGICAL COLORS

Green is the color of "Ordinary Time." Green symbolizes life, hope, and anticipation.

White/Gold is worn during Christmas, Easter, and other special celebrations. White symbolizes purity, light, glory, and joy.

Violet/Purple is worn during Advent and Lent. It symbolizes penance, sacrifice, and preparation.

Red is worn during Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Pentecost. This color signifies God's love, blood, fire, and celebrations of Martyrs.

# AMBO AND LECTIONARY

The ambo, also known as the pulpit or lectern, is an altar of the Word. It is where we proclaim the Word of God and place the lectionary, the book of readings from Sacred Scripture.



# POSTURES OF PRAYER

Standing is a mark of reverence and readiness. We stand in the presence of one we wish to honor and to serve.

Sitting is the posture of those who listen with attention.

Kneeling is a sign of penance, prayer, respect, and adoration, similar to that of standing.

# BAPTISMAL FONT

The baptismal pool, or font, reminds us that every time we come to Eucharist we come through baptism. Baptism is our "door" to the Church and the sacraments. We dip our hand in the water and make the Sign of the Cross.



# SINGING

When we gather for prayer, St. Paul instructs us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to God (Colossians 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (Acts 2:46). St. Augustine reminds us, "Singing is for one who loves." When we sing we pray twice.



# CRUCIFIX

In the crucifix we see the basic symbol and source of any Catholic celebration. We carry it in processions and place it in areas of honor and focus.

# CANDLES

Candle light indicates Christ's presence as the Light of the World. There is often a red votive candle or sanctuary lamp burning before the tabernacle and other candles used in both devotional areas and the assembly area of the Church.

# VESSELS

The bread and wine is placed on the altar for Mass. We place them in sacred vessels. The bread is in a paten or ciboria and the wine is poured into a chalice. These vessels can usually be found on the credence table before the preparation of the altar.

# STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Around the walls of many Churches you will find the Stations of the Cross, images of the journey of Jesus' passion and death. These remind us of his ultimate sign of love for us.

# PRESIDER'S CHAIR

In the front of the assembly area we find a very special seat for the one presiding and leading the assembly. This seating is arranged so that the presiding minister is part of the assembly, yet in a convenient place to exercise their ministry.

# STATUES AND ART

Statues, paintings, stained glass, and other pieces of art that depict sacred images, including the saints, help grow our devotion. Their beauty helps open our hearts to our God who is the source of all beauty.

# HOLY OILS

In the Church we will see a niche in the wall or a little chest, called the ambry, which contains three vessels of holy oil. The oil of catechumens is used to bless and strengthen those preparing for Baptism. The oil of the sick brings Jesus' strength and healing to those who are sick. The sacred chrism oil is used in celebrating the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.



# PASCHAL CANDLE

Usually standing by the baptismal pool, or font, is a large candle, called the paschal candle. At the Easter Vigil, as the candle is placed in the water we pray: "May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life." It is burned during Easter, and at Baptisms and funerals.



# TABERNACLE

The tabernacle, which means "tent," is the "little house" the Blessed Sacrament is kept. The Eucharist is reserved here for prayer and to be brought to those in need.



# GOD'S OPEN HOUSE

## *passport*

- ☐ Altar and Missal
- ☐ Vestments
- ☐ Liturgical Colors
- ☐ Ambo and Lectionary
- ☐ Postures of Prayer
- ☐ Baptismal Font
- ☐ Singing
- ☐ Crucifix
- ☐ Candles
- ☐ Stations of the Cross
- ☐ Vessels
- ☐ Presider's Chair
- ☐ Statues and Art
- ☐ Holy Oils
- ☐ Paschal Candle
- ☐ Tabernacle