

The Bread of Life

Outline	Environment	Materials
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gathering and Opening Prayer2. Activity Centers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity 1: Mobile• Activity 2: Reflection on Being the Body of Christ• Activity 3: Tour of the Church• Activity 4: Making Gratitude Lists3. Closing Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A space large enough to accommodate 4 corner activity centers set up for the families to move around according to their coded nametags.• Table and chairs for family groups• 4 facilitators• Prayer table	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nametags (color coded and made in the shape of loaves and fishes for gathering families at tables and into activity centers)• Light refreshments• <i>Songs of Celebration</i> CD• Additional materials needed are listed within each activity

Gathering and Opening Prayer (60 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Various types of breads or rolls representing various regions and countries of the world (such as: rye roll, Eastern Europe; pita, Middle East; soda bread, Ireland; croissant, France; pizza, Italy; bagel, Israel; tortilla, Mexico; scone, England; wonton, China; lefse, Scandinavia; fry bread, Native Americans; chapati, India; sourdough roll, United States)
- Colorful napkins
- Scripted index cards
- Large table or altar
- Copies of the **Family Eucharist Retreat Handout 1**
- Pencils

Welcome the participants. Have facilitators distribute nametags and invite families to enjoy the light refreshments as they find a place to sit.

Before the celebration, prepare 7–10 children for the processional. Demonstrate how they are to process into the worship space each holding one of the breads in a colorful napkin. Walk them through the placing of the bread on the table/altar and give them their scripts. The scripts can be written on index cards upon which are printed the words: “This pita bread represents the people of the Middle East.”

Invite families to sit in a circle around the large altar or table. Or, you may also choose to pray in the church, with the altar as the focus.

Opening Celebration

Sing “We Come to the Table,” *Songs of Celebration* CD, track 13.

Have children process into the worship space carrying the various breads representing different countries.

People around the world rely upon grain made into bread to live. We all share the common need for bread to sustain us. As each type of bread is placed upon the center table, let us give thanks for the nation it represents.

Have each child come forth naming the bread and the country, people, or region it represents. After the bread is placed upon the table, the children may be seated with their families.

Read *John 6:5–13*. (The Gospel may be read or acted out.)

Invite the families to move to their assigned tables to reflect on the Gospel. If you are in the church, have families cluster in pews or seats.

Distribute *Family Eucharist Retreat Handout 1* and have families discuss the questions and complete the handouts.

Encourage family members to explain their responses to one another.

Ask the families to talk about why Jesus asked the disciples to gather up the leftovers, then have each family write an ending to the story that illustrates what Jesus might have done with the twelve baskets of leftovers.

Invite the participants to share some of these story endings in the large group.

Conclude the activity with these or similar words:

In the Eucharist, we gather to break the bread and share the cup, which is Jesus' own Body and Blood. We become what we eat—the Body of Christ and the bread of life for others. Jesus instructed the disciples to gather the leftovers so that nothing would be lost. This is important to remember, because in Jesus' eyes, everyone is important and loved. In Holy Communion, we become one with Jesus so that we can go into the world and give Jesus to others. When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we are given the courage to help people in need.

Close this celebration with a verse from the opening song.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity Centers

Direct the participants to note the color code on their nametag and ask them to move to the appropriate center.

Tell the group that the lunch break will occur after the families have visited two centers. The remaining two centers can be visited after lunch.

Activity 1: Mobile (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- *Look at the Moon* by May Garelick* or a similar book
- Vine-type plant
- Model Magic or other self-hardening clay
- Colored paper plates cut in half with four holes punched into the straight edge and one hole punched into the top edge
- Wooden skewer or similar object
- 5 lengths of narrow ribbon for each participant
- Permanent markers

Assemble the group.

Read aloud *Look at the Moon* by May Garelick.

Ask “What was it that connected the little girl to all the various animals and places?”

Invite one of the parents to read *John 15:1–5, 7–8*.

Show the participants the plant and explain how it is an example of what Jesus was talking about in the Gospel story.

Invite families to make a clay mobile showing how we are all connected to Jesus: Direct them to illustrate the half plate with a symbol that represents Jesus and to write the family name on the back of the plate.

Have them use the clay to mold four objects symbolizing people, pets, sports, or other important connections in their lives. When the objects are completed, pierce a hole into the top of each with the skewer and connect them to the bottom of the plate with the strands of ribbon. String one ribbon through the top of the plate to hang the mobile. These can be hung in a central place in the home to remind family members that we are all one in the Body of Christ. *Rotation and Break (5 minutes)*

Activity 2: Reflection on Being the Body of Christ (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bible
- Copies of **Family Eucharist Retreat Handout 2**
- Pencils

When the group is assembled:

Read *1 Corinthians 12:12–22, 25–27*.

Explain that Paul was speaking to the early followers of Jesus about how each person is important to the Church.

Discuss the reading using the following questions:

- What do you think Paul was trying to teach the early Christians?
- When did you become a member of Christ's Body?

**Look at the Moon*, May Garelick. Mondo Publishing, New York, NY, 1996.

- When you think about the people who are part of the Body of Christ, who are the weakest? Who are the ones most hurting? Who are the members of the body who are thought of as not important?
- What can we do to help the Body of Christ thrive?

Direct the families to work together on **Family Eucharist Retreat Handout 2**. This sheet can be placed on the refrigerator at home as a reminder to do something together to help the hurting and weak members of the Body of Christ each week as a preparation for First Eucharist.

Lunch (30–45 minutes)

Meal Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, for the food we are about to share. We are thankful for Jesus, who is our living bread. This bread calls us to share ourselves unselfishly as food for one another. This bread is a sign of our unity with people all over the world. Let us remember the many nations that live on the planet earth as we are nourished by the food before us. We remember those who have prepared this meal and pray for those who have no food to eat this day. And so we pray together "Bless us, O Lord."

Activity 3: Tour of the Church (20 minutes)

Pastor (deacon or catechist) takes the families into the sacristy to let the children and their parent(s) see and touch the vessels used for Eucharist, the altar cloths, the sink where the vessels are washed, the tabernacle, and the altar. Each can be explained as to the significance and use. These or similar words may be used:

- The chalice is a large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ.
- The paten is a dish that holds the bread that becomes the Body of Christ.
- The ciborium is a larger vessel that may be used to distribute Communion. It is also used to hold the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- The decanter or flagon is the bottle-like pitcher used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass. It is carried to the altar during the procession of gifts.

- Bread and wine are used at Mass, carried to the altar during the procession of gifts, and consecrated to become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Communion cups are used at communion when the people receive from the cup. They are kept on the credence table and brought to the altar when the gifts are brought forth.
- The credence table is the small table by the side of the altar on which the bread and wine are placed before being brought to the altar for consecration.
- The purificator is a white cloth used to cleanse the chalice and communion cups after each person drinks and when the Mass is completed.
- The corporal is a white linen cloth upon which are placed the vessels containing the bread and wine used during the Mass.
- The pall is the stiff, square, white cover that is placed over the chalice.
- The altar is the table upon which the Eucharist is celebrated. It contains an altar stone consecrated or blessed by the bishop.
- An altar cloth covers the table.
- The tabernacle is the place where the consecrated hosts are kept.
- The monstrance is a vessel designed to expose the consecrated Host to the assembly either for adoration in a church or for carrying in a solemn procession.
- The sanctuary lamp is an oil lamp or wax candle that is near the tabernacle. It is always lit when the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle as a sign of honor to the Lord.
- The pyx is a vessel used to carry Holy Communion to the sick.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity 4: Making Gratitude Lists (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Various colors of construction paper (red, pink, and green scraps need to be included)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Markers
- A large poster board for each family

Explain that in the Eucharist, we give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus, people, and all creation.

Direct the families to make lists of reasons they are thankful to God. Each family should then select the six most important ones. Have families work together to list these reasons on a large poster board, and decorate the board.

Invite families to share their lists and display them in the meeting room.

Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Large table or altar with the bread upon it
- Paper and pencils for each family
- Clown or mime artist
- Water-soluble paint
- *Songs of Celebration* CD
- Bible

Gather the families seated in a circle back at the prayer table.

Assign beforehand a catechist or facilitator in the audience to loudly say, “Everyone needs.” Then the clown or mime artist acts out one of the following: food, water, a home, clean air, medicine, to play, school, peace, work, love, safety, God, and anything you might want to add.

Encourage the children to guess what the mime artist or clown is acting out.

Continue by having different voices proclaim the phrase “Everyone needs” before each action.

Invite the families to be mindful of the families of the world who do not have these things and to prepare a petition for families in various countries naming their need. During this time, the clown or mime artist will go around the room marking the cheek of each child with a cross to symbolize Jesus.

Invite everyone to gather around the table and have a member of each family pray their petition aloud.

Have the facilitators and other adults break the breads into enough pieces for each person to have a piece. Distribute the bread.

Read *John 6:48, 51–57* (Bread of Life).

Sing the closing song, “We Come to the Table,” track 13, *Songs of Celebration* CD.

Thank the families for participating in the retreat.

