

Children's Eucharist Retreat

Sharing Bread

This is a day retreat for children. You should conduct it close to the time of the celebration of the Sacrament. If you have fewer than 15 children, you may want to conduct the activities in consecutive order.

Outline	Environment	Materials
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gathering and Opening Prayer2. Activity Centers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity 1: Making Bread• Activity 2: Making Mobiles• Activity 3: Learning to Receive the Eucharist3. Snack4. Closing Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 4 group facilitators (2 per group)• 1 volunteer to bake bread• Prayer table	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nametags (color coded for activity centers)• <i>Songs of Celebration</i> CD• Napkins, cups, drinks• Additional materials needed are listed within each activity

Gathering and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather children and facilitators in a circle around the prayer table.

Play selections from *Songs of Celebration* CD as background music.

Lead the opening prayer with these or similar words:

God, our Father, we give you thanks for the gift of your Son Jesus. Help us to become ready to receive him as the Bread of Life in Holy Communion. We ask this in Jesus' name, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Explain that the Eucharist is made of bread, and that they will be making bread and talking about why it is important.

Organize the large group into two smaller groups. Both groups will bake bread simultaneously. They will separate to do the two remaining activities.

Activity Centers

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

Activity 1: Making Bread (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Samples of different types of bread
- Copies of **Children's/Candidates' Eucharist Retreat Handouts 1 and 2**
- Pencils

Gather in a cafeteria or classroom. Follow the directions for making bread on the **Children's/Candidates' Eucharist Retreat Handout 1**.

Show the children different kinds of bread. These might be pita bread, muffins, nut bread, and so on. Lead a discussion about how often children eat bread, as toast, in sandwiches, and with butter. Tell the children that bread is an ancient food; even before Jesus was born, it helped people sustain life. Guide the discussion to help the children discover that our Eucharist is special bread, because it gives us eternal life and is a special way that Jesus is always with us.

Distribute the **Children's/Candidates' Eucharist Retreat Handout 2**. Have children work in pairs or small groups to write a prayer of thanks for bread. When children have finished, select one or more prayers to share at snack time.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity 2: Making Mobiles (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Small paper plates with punched holes
- Dowels or wire hangers
- Yarn or string
- Tape
- **Children's/Candidates' Eucharist Retreat Handout 3**

Gather in the classroom with the catechist or a volunteer.

Distribute the Children's/Candidates' Eucharist Retreat Handout 3, and explain each of the symbols and how it relates to the sacrament. Tell the children that they will be making a mobile with the symbols.

Distribute materials, or have them available at tables where 3 to 5 children can comfortably work. Have children color the symbols, then cut them out and glue them to the paper plates. Show children how to tie the yarn or string through the hole and suspend the plate from the hanger or dowel. Have children label their mobiles with their names. Store the mobiles where children can retrieve them when they leave.

Engage children in a discussion about their favorite symbol and why they prefer it.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity 3: Learning to Receive the Eucharist (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Unconsecrated hosts and wine

Gather in the parish church or classroom with a priest, deacon, or minister of Holy Communion.

Explain that, just as we have special manners we use when eating, we have special manners for receiving Communion. Tell children that they will learn these manners today. Emphasize that the elements that they are receiving today are not consecrated; because they are practicing today, they are not receiving the real Eucharist.

Demonstrate for small groups of children the correct way to hold their hands, receive the Host, and place the Host in their mouths. Similarly, show children how to take the cup and a sip of the wine. Teach children to say "Amen" in response to the minister's words.

Direct children to line up to receive the unconsecrated elements. Gently correct where necessary, and praise their efforts and behavior.

Answer any questions.

Sing "We Come to the Table," *Songs of Celebration* CD, track 13. Teach the children the words and actions; when necessary, explain their meaning. Sing the song as time permits.

Snack (20 minutes)

Note: The children will be anxious to eat the rolls, especially if they could smell them baking! Have drinks and napkins ready, and invite children to find a place at the tables. Serve the rolls in baskets at tables. Check with parents beforehand to be certain that no child has wheat, gluten, or other allergies that could cause an adverse reaction. Before the children enjoy their efforts, read one of the children's thanksgiving prayers. As the children are eating, walk among the tables, asking how they are enjoying their snack. Point out that they, like the people who make hosts for the Eucharist, took simple natural things to make a special meal. After the snack, read another child's thanksgiving prayer.

Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Assemble the group again in the large gathering space.

Praise the children for their participation and thank the leaders for their help.

Recap the activities for the day; elicit from the children what they learned.

Emphasize the following major points:

- Jesus chose bread for his special way to be with us.
- Many symbols remind us of the Eucharist.
- We use special, respectful manners when receiving the Eucharist.

Ask everyone to join you in the closing prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for being with us today. Thank you for bringing us together to learn more about the Eucharist. We have learned that bread is a special food that brings us life. The Eucharist is even more special, because it brings us eternal life. We have learned some symbols of the Eucharist and their meanings. We have also learned how to receive you respectfully. Help us to remember all that we have learned. Thank you for this special day. Amen.

Conclude with "We Come to the Table" from the *Songs of Celebration* CD.

Make any announcements and distribute prayers and the mobiles that the children made.