First Communion

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Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)

First Communion
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Background Notes
Key Scripture Texts: Various

Introduction

Many “firsts” saturate our early life. First breaths, first words, and first steps. We are not always conscious of these or their importance, but they truly shape our human development. Trial and error often accompanies these “firsts,” and it may seem like we are constantly going back for “seconds”? Watching my grandchildren over the past six years only confirms the way human beings practice in order to get it right. Learning to walk falls into this category, and many preliminary “steps” precede the actual ones. Kids try out their moves before finally incorporating them into real strides. They are fun to watch!

How like children are all of us. In matters of the Spirit, we are also first-timers, trying out our new moves and gestures. We even develop a certain speech-style in rhythm with the truths we learn from the Bible. What’s important in all of these “firsts” is that we get a good start with the best possible understanding of the newfound faith we have in Jesus Christ. That doesn’t mean being perfect or avoiding false starts. A great many habits lie within our past, and they have the power to slow us down or pull us off track. Young children, if they are fortunate, begin their firsts with fewer hindrances, but even for them things like heredity and environment can distort normal patterns of growth. For these we need instruction.

The church teaches us many firsts, and among them are the Sacraments. The term “sacrament” is often misunderstood, and I have had to answer questions about whether the word has anything to do with what happens to the bread and the wine during communion. In fact, the term comes from the Latin, sacramentum, which has to do with making something sacred. Another way of thinking about this is to see ordinary things, like bread and wine, put to sacred use. Dedicating ourselves to the service of Jesus Christ our Lord is also a form of sacramental worship.

What is the purpose of a sacrament? Primarily, it reminds us of our need for God to take the ordinary things in our lives and grace them with His presence and purpose. Looked at this way, sacraments are rightly called “means of grace,” but they require faith on our part for them to have the desired result in our lives. They are not magic, nor should they be treated that way.

Early in our Christian experience, either as new born children or as accountable adults, we make our first contact with the reality of God. Perhaps the most basic forms of human nourishment from our mothers or the gentle caress of our fathers or the smiles from admiring strangers sent strong messages that we were special and blessed and loved. From such encounters, we felt God’s presence, whether we had ideas or words to go with it or not. The church, through its example and teaching, tries to explain such experiences to us as we become more aware. Children are a special part of the church’s educational ministry, for what is learned at this early stage matters for the long-term. Preparing them for first communion is vital within the life of the church.

In our brief study this week, we acknowledge that many of our children will be taking Communion for the first time, or at least will share Communion with the wider congregation for the first time. For this moment, they have been prepared through thoughtful instruction. Jesus once told his disciples, “Let the little children come to me, for of such is the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). What better way to make
that invitation **tangible** than to instruct and prepare young children for taking their First Communion? In this process, every effort is made to insure that each child has made a personal decision to receive Christ as Savior and Lord. Then, following this, to help them understand the key beliefs of the Christian faith as supported in the Bible, God’s Word.

We begin our *Notes* with an overview of what they may have learned through the carefully prepared materials of the *Young Believers Discipleship Series*.¹ The following section ("So … You Want to Take Communion") is adapted from that curriculum. As adults you are able to look over your young people’s shoulders and share the benefits of what they are learning.

**So … You Want to Take Communion**

What is a Sacrament? That question leads off the children’s instruction, and the answer they learn follows here.

Sacraments are very important to the life of the Church. They are a means of grace. John Wesley said, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (The Means of Grace. [http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/016.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/016.htm)). This means a sacrament is an outward action that represents God’s giving His grace on the inside. They are God’s channels for supplying His grace to human beings.

**The Role of the Sacraments**

The historical Church has recognized many different means of grace through the centuries. Of the means of grace, the church defines some as sacraments. The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, Confession, Last Rites, Ordination, and Marriage). The Protestant Church typically recognizes two sacraments (Baptism and Communion). Some churches do not acknowledge any official means of grace, and some churches and theologians say the number is infinite. Though the sacraments acknowledged and the number of sacraments differ, most Christian denominations recognize that God works through ordinary, physical means to give His grace to His followers. Though not considered sacraments, Christians recognize the grace-giving quality of prayer, Scripture reading, fasting, service, worship, and other disciplines of the Christian life in addition to those listed previously. The Protestant Church may not recognize marriage, ordination, and others as sacraments, but they certainly recognize the grace-filled nature of these actions. The question for many, focuses on the role of the sacraments in the Christian’s life. With an emphasis on the freedom of the Holy Spirit and an inward transformation, many consider the sacraments of little or no value. Protestantism shifted the focus of the worship service from the sacramental to the preaching of the Word. This shift caused the sacraments to become of peripheral importance. This is unfortunate because an added emphasis on preaching does not mean the sacraments have any less value to the Christian life. (For a more in depth discussion of this dilemma and the theological concerns involved read Dr. Rob L. Staples book *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*. Available at [www.NPH.com](http://www.NPH.com).)

Proclaiming the Word of God can and should take two distinct forms of proclamation. First, proclamation should be verbal. “Verbal” means to use words. It is the responsibility of the Church to verbally proclaim the Word of God and His desire for our salvation and growth. We do this by preaching, teaching, and sharing our faith. Second, proclamation should be an action. Christians must use actions to proclaim the Word of God and His desire for people’s salvation and growth. The sacraments are one means to fulfill the active proclamation of the gospel. They are visible and physical. They help us see that, “God may accomplish spiritual ends through material means” (Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, p. 62).

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¹ For further information see the website dedicated to this topic: [http://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2369/2369940.pdf](http://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2369/2369940.pdf).
Mystery
The sacraments, in this regard, are mysterious. In some mysterious way God uses physical things to bring about spiritual changes and give His grace. These physical means are not the only ways God gives His grace, nor is God limited to only these means. However, God has chosen to give grace through our participation in them.

The sacraments are mysterious because no one knows how God gives grace through these physical means, or why He chose to use these particular means to give His grace. Why would God choose water as a grace-giving symbol of our participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Why would God choose unleavened bread and a sip from a cup to symbolize the new covenant and give His sustaining grace to His followers? No one knows how or why, but, through the centuries, they have confirmed its reality. God gives His grace through ordinary, physical means.

What is Communion?
If baptism is an initiation sacrament, then Communion is a sustaining sacrament. In the sacrament of Communion, Christians find strength and grace to follow God as they should. John Wesley believed Communion to be one of three chief means of grace for a follower of Jesus Christ (The Means of Grace. http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/016.htm).

The Church uses several words to define and describe the sacrament of Communion. The word “Communion” signifies the binding together or the unity desired as part of this sacrament. The root of this word is the Greek word koinonia meaning, “fellowship.” Christ-followers live in community with God and others.

The word “Eucharist” signifies the celebratory and thanksgiving aspects of the sacrament. The root of this is the Greek word eucharistein meaning, “to be thankful.” The time of Eucharist was not sober and somber, but rather joyous and celebratory.

In addition to these words, there are several additional aspects of Communion. First, Communion is a time of commemoration. We call it the “Lord’s Supper,” because Jesus started this meal shortly before His crucifixion. The focus here is on commemoration or remembering. The Greek word Jesus uses in Luke 22:19, anamnesis, means more than just bringing something from the past to mind. Anamnesis signifies that in some mysteriously spiritual way Jesus is as present with those who take Communion today as He was with His original disciples.

Second, Communion carries the image of sacrifice. Our commemoration of Christ is a commemoration of His death and resurrection. When taking Communion, we ask God to remember Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. But the sacrifice does not solely belong to Christ. We, too, sacrifice. Christ gives himself to us, and we, in turn, give ourselves to Christ. In this, Communion also becomes a time of repentance and confession with God giving His forgiving grace to those who truly repent and confess their sins. Finally, Communion has eschatological/kingdom of God elements. “Eschatological” concerns the culmination of human history and the beginning of God’s rule. There is no focus on a particular theory of the end times, only recognition that one day God will bring about true peace and justice on earth. Celebrating the Communion looks forward to the day when God will set everything right.

Real Presence
Throughout the history of the Church several ways have been attempted to explain God’s presence in Communion. The Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation means the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther’s doctrine of Consubstantiation means the bread and wine do not become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Luther believed Christ is bodily present in the elements “like heat in a red-hot poker.”

Ulrich Zwingli held to a Memorial view. This view shifts the focus from the elements to the attitudes and responses of the worshipper. The worshipper commemorates and memorializes Christ by taking part in Communion. John Calvin balanced Luther’s doctrine of Consubstantiation and Zwingli’s Memorial view without sacrificing Jesus’ presence in Communion. Calvin’s doctrine of Spiritual Presence taught that the Holy Spirit makes the bread and wine effective to give grace to the believer.
Though varying widely, these doctrinal perspectives focus on one thing—the presence of Jesus in the act of Communion. In some mysterious way, Jesus Christ is present with us, giving us grace, each time we take communion. This is called “Real Presence.”

John Wesley’s view seems a blending of Luther and Calvin’s doctrines, though Wesley is more indebted to his Anglican heritage. Though not bodily present with the elements of Communion, John Wesley believed Jesus Christ is really present when the believer takes part in Communion. This presence makes Communion a true means of grace to the believer.

As the children take part in Communion, we remind them of the serious nature of Communion, but also the celebratory aspects as well. For too long, the sober and the solemn have ruled the Communion service. It is time to reclaim the celebratory, grace-giving nature of Communion. It is a serious time, but also one of great grace and love from God.

Key points of instruction for children taking First Communion:

1. **Communion is a serious time.**
   Taking part in the communion service is a serious experience. It is not something we do lightly. But, it is nothing to fear. When taking communion, focus on what God has done and wants to do in and through you.

2. **Realize God is with you.**
   When you take communion, God is present with you. Taking communion is more than just an empty action. Jesus promised that when you take communion, He will be there with you.

3. **The word “elements” means the bread and the juice.**
   The pastor will use the word “elements” to mean the bread and juice being used in communion. The elements (bread and juice) give us physical thing objects represent the spiritual activity God is doing.

4. **The pastor may serve communion is several different ways.**
   Sometimes, the pastor will have everyone come forward, and receive communion at the front. Other times, the pastor may pass the elements down each row. The bread may look like a loaf of bread you break a piece from, or it may be a wafer. The juice may be in small cups, or you may dip the bread in a single, large cup. There are several different ways of distributing communion.

5. **The person giving you the elements may say something to you.**
   When a person gives you the bread they may say, “This is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was broken for you.” The person giving the juice may say, “This is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you.” These words help us remember that Jesus sacrificed himself for us.

6. **Eat the bread and drink the juice.**
   Listen carefully to the pastor’s instructions. Your pastor will tell you when you should eat the bread and drink the juice. Sometimes he or she will have you eat the bread and drink the juice while you are still at the front. Sometimes, he or she will have you wait until everyone has the elements.

7. **When finished, wait patiently and pray.**
   Communion is a spiritual time between you and God. Use the time following Communion to continue focusing your thoughts on God and what He might be saying to you. God may ask you to confess a sin, give Him an area of your life, or begin doing something for Him.
Communion and Children

The Church of the Nazarene believes in open Communion. This means all Christians are invited to the table to share in the elements. The church teaches that Communion is a sacrament remembering Christ’s body and blood shed, so everyone who asks may be forgiven. This implies that ALL Christians, regardless of age, are invited. We, also, believe Communion is a “means of grace” – God’s grace is expressed to us as we partake of the elements. John Wesley taught Communion could lead a person, who desired to be in right relationship with God, to faith.

Within Evangelical churches, there are four main strands of thought regarding children’s taking Communion. Children should be invited to take Communion:

1. After they accept Jesus as Savior and understand what Communion means.
2. After they accept Jesus as Savior.
3. On the basis of Prevenient Grace—they are part of the kingdom of God until they reject grace and God.
4. As they participate with adults in the rituals of their faith. In this way children can discover the deep meaning of Communion.

Catherine Stonehouse encourages churches that “do not allow children to partake of the elements, to develop some ways of inviting children to come with their parents for a blessing, and communicate to the children anticipation for the special day when they, too, will be able to join in this special meal.”2 “Connecting a New Generation” – the Decadal Emphasis on Children and Youth –points out “children are disciples in training not disciples in waiting.” This emphasis encourages churches to make children full participants in the Body. Ultimately, this is a decision parents and local churches must make. Whatever the decision, let us follow Jesus’ words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

Eucharist: Through New Eyes

We now turn our attention to some helpful background material for understanding the meaning of the Eucharist.

Before I was baptized and became a member of the church where I grew up (I was nine years old at the time), participating in the Eucharist — we called it Holy Communion — was not something I could do on my own. Frankly, I don’t think anyone would have minded had I reached over and took the bread and the cup from the gold trays being passed down our row. After all, I sat between my parents and could have pulled the deed off without detection. But, wanting to honor the local traditions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church at the time, my parents didn’t let me take my own elements from the trays. However, Daddy, being a bit of a non-conformist in his own way (he was a Methodist by birth), found a way to get around the rules. When the tray for the bread was passed, he would take his piece, and quietly break it in half, handing me one portion to hold until we all ate together. Taking the cup was a bit trickier, but he managed to share that too, drinking only half and then letting me finishing the rest. Things like that you don’t forget — ever. From that experience I learned an important lesson about Communion: it’s about sharing in the symbols of Christ’s dead with another human being — in this case, my father.

The power of that experience brought to light for me new understandings with time. God was my Father as well, and Jesus was the gift he broke and shared with me on the cross. Every time I took those symbols, it was as if the whole story was told again. Strangely, that’s precisely what the Eucharist does: it tells the story again as if it were all happening right now for the first time. When the followers of Jesus sat with him in the Upper Room on the night he was taken from them and went to the cross, they watched such a story being told as they had seen it and heard it from as far back as they could remember. They were Jews, and they knew a great deal about special meals. One meal in particular transformed one night such that it became “unlike any other night.”

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They call that feast *Pesach* — the re-telling of what happened to their ancestors some fifteen hundred years before.

In great haste, as the last great plague descended on Egypt taking the lives of all the firstborn of the Egyptians — including the Pharaoh’s — the Israelites celebrated Passover (*Pesach*) in anticipation of leaving Egypt free persons after four hundred years of slavery. Their bread was baked without yeast — there was no time for it to rise. Blood was spilled as the lamb was slain as the sign of their redemption and its costly price. Once free, they plunged into the waters of the Red Sea, only to discover the seabed dry and the Sea rolled up around them like walls of clear crystal in the blazing sun of the desert. All of them “passed over” to the other side, leaving the Pharaoh and his armies to face the falling waters which pronounced judgment for the sin of slavery. Passover. That’s what we call it in English — the passing over from slavery to freedom, from death to life, from Egypt to the promised land.

Once a year that story gets told in Jewish households, and has been for thirty-five hundred years. “What makes this night different from every other night?” The same question is posed by the children and the same answers are given, declaring the love of God for His people and His commitment to rescue them from sin and death. Therefore, when Jesus met with his followers in the Upper Room, they behaved together like a family — a new family, celebrating Pesach as they had before. Oddly, this night became, in its own way, unlike the other nights of Pesach celebrated in the past. Reclining at the table, handling the familiar symbols of Passover, praying the same prayers and engaging in the same symbolic actions, Jesus led his followers in what looked on the surface to be a normal Pesach. However, something was wrong. At crucial moments in the traditional Passover Seder, Jesus started saying things about a piece of bread and one of the cups (there were several used during the Seder) that sounded new, different.

“This is my body,” he would say. “This is my blood,” he ominously declared as he passed these particular symbols to the disciples. The story seemed to change — the old, old Passover story underwent a major re-working that night as it passed through the hands and lips of Jesus. He was known for changing the ordinary stories and making them end in surprising ways. He had done it with the parables he told, shifting the plot or altering the climax, and making the wrong characters say and do all of the right things. Remember the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan? In many ways, what Jesus did that night had the force of a parable, introducing in the story of Passover a fresh element. Suddenly Passover was no longer the story of just national Israel — it was the story of Israel as it reached its climax in the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sin of the world.

Paul had reason to comment about the Eucharist in his letter to the Corinthians. Most of his audience were not Jewish and had to be taught by Jewish-Christian teachers the old stories of Israel and what the stories had to do with pagan Gentiles like them. Actually, the Corinthians were no strangers to religious meals since most of the temples built to the Greek and Roman deities had rituals involving bringing food and offering it in sacrifice. Sometimes the devotees would share in these meals, believing that something magical might happen because the food had been influenced by the temple surroundings or by the gods themselves. When some of these Gentiles became Christians, they had to re-learn the stories which they had once heard told by Homer or Hesiod or Virgil. Now they had new stories, taken from the Jewish Bible but applied to them. Having a special feast to celebrate the central story of the Christian faith made sense to them. Of course, it required a little explaining when they heard the words “this is my body” or “this is my blood.” From a pagan perspective they had a whole different meaning. In Christian terms, this simply meant sharing in the life of Jesus.

To clarify what Jesus actually told his followers about the Eucharist, Paul gave this teaching to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:23-28 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new
The tradition Paul cites traces back to the apostles themselves, and that is the meaning of the words “I received from the Lord….delivered to you.” The key elements of the tradition include:

1. The original setting for the Eucharist: the night Jesus was betrayed, after “the supper.” The Greek form is an infinitive construct (to deipnēsai), behaving like a noun. We suppose that he refers to the Passover meal itself.

2. The symbolic actions taken by Jesus: took bread, took the cup. These would have been in accordance with the pattern of the Jewish Pesach meal, selecting from the usages of bread and wine particular ones which corresponded to the sufferings of Jesus, most likely coinciding with the afikomen and the third cup — the cup of redemption, also called the cup of blessing.

3. The breaking of the bread teaches the broken body of Christ, pierced in hands, feet and side.

4. The wine is connected to the new covenant which God is making through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Against the background of ancient treaty ratification, this has the form of a covenant renewal ceremony, but with the prerogative of the treaty-maker (suzerain) to alter the terms of the original covenant in light of new realities. In one sense, each time we share in the Eucharist we renewal the covenant as well.

5. The language “in remembrance of me” is also covenant language. It likely has two meanings. First, like the Passover feast, the Eucharist is an event which “makes present” an event which has already taken place. We do no re-offer Christ on the altar, as some traditions claim, but we do re-present the events surrounding his sufferings and death so that the benefits of God’s grace might become present for “your soul’s comfort and joy.” Secondly, the language reminds us of the covenant faithfulness of God. The word “remember” takes the form of a prayer which seeks God’s covenant action in remembering Jesus, raising him from the dead and bringing in the kingdom.

6. This latter point brings us to the proclamation aspect of celebrating the Eucharist: we look forward to the time which Jesus will bring in the kingdom, climaxing with the fulfillment of the feast in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus alluded to this in Matthew 26:29, “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

7. The Eucharist is an occasion for Christ followers to “examine themselves” in preparation for an honest and sincere partaking of the elements. Sins are confessed, hearts are made clear, surrender to Christ is made complete, and broken fellowship with others is restored during this time of examination.

A word about the term “Eucharist.” It is usually translated as “Great Thanksgiving,” because it offers thanks for the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ for our sins.

The Nazarene ritual of the Lord’s Supper includes the following language:

The Lord himself ordained this holy sacrament. He commanded His disciples to partake of the bread and wine, emblems of His broken body and shed blood. This is His table. The feast is for His disciples. Let all those who have with true repentance forsaken their sins, and have believed in Christ unto salvation, draw near and take these emblems, and, by faith, partake of the life of Jesus Christ, to your soul’s comfort and joy. Let us remember that it is the memorial of the death and passion of our Lord; also a token of His coming again. Let us not forget that we are one, at one table with the Lord.

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3 The last piece of matzah eaten at Passover is called the afikomen and is substituted for the lamb: it even has to be eaten before midnight, just as Moses commanded, "You shall let none of it remain until morning" (Ex. 12:10). Three matzahs sit prominently on the Passover table. Why is this final piece of matzah called the afikomen? It is curious to find a Greek work in the middle of a Hebrew feast. Its Greek meaning can be understood as "that which is coming", i.e. dessert, yet some have seen the possibility of taking it as "he who is coming." According to Jewish tradition, Messiah will come at Passover to bring a redemption like the redemption brought through Moses. This is why a place is left at the table for Elijah, the forerunner of Messiah (Malachi 4:5).
Holy Communion is not the invention of the church but the gift of Jesus to the church. The Lord’s Table does not belong to the church but comes from the gracious hand of the Lord Jesus Christ and forever remains his table. We do not believe that the church dispenses the sacrament, instead, the church becomes the hands of Jesus, doing his bidding, sharing his bread with his people. Rather than a place where persons are divided because of differing views about the nature of communion or who is qualified to receive it or what happens when they do, the Lord’s Table is where “we are one, at one table with the Lord.” The Eucharist celebrates the unity of the body of Christ, and we ought to freely make the association between the body of Christ that is the church and the body of Christ that we partake together.

**Conclusion**

Families experience a special fellowship when they meet together at the Lord’s Table. Eucharist becomes *The Great Thanksgiving* for the wider community of families worshipping together. Real, tangible transactions take place at the altar where the elements are distributed. Communion is not a mere ritual — going through the motions because it’s the proper thing to do. Expectation and hope surround the taking of the sacrament, even as we prepare our hearts to receive that special grace God has for us *on this day*. Then, we look around us and observe our brothers and sisters who have come along with us, and when we do, their needs become our needs, their sustenance becomes our sustenance, and their joys become our joys.

Do we recognize the Body of Christ when we share the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 11:29)? Paul challenges the Corinthian believers to a deeper sharing of themselves with their needy brothers and sisters while sharing the Lord’s Table. By “recognizing” the Body the apostle means that his audience sees the Body more clearly through the sacramental body. If selfishness existed in the church (and it did, in the Corinthians’ case), taking the Eucharist was a means of grace for renewing the commitment to meet the needs of those around.

This week our children’s experience of Holy Communion also challenges us to look afresh at what really happens in our hearts when we eat the bread and drink the cup. Are we able to imagine today’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper as *our first communion as well*?

One final note about final things. A strong linkage has grown up between the communion experience and the future coming of Jesus. “We proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,” Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 12:26). “I will not drink this cup until I do so anew in my father’s kingdom,” Jesus promised (Matthew 26:29). These texts add additional dimension to the Eucharist, for they connect the table here with *the table there* — that is, with the table celebrating the marriage supper of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:9). Our ultimate union and reunion takes place in the future when Jesus returns, and a table will once more be spread, this time, for all nations who are at last redeemed (Isaiah 25:6). Today’s celebration is tomorrow’s consummation.

Glory to God! Amen.
Digger Deeper: First Communion
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *First Communion*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website at [http://www.chicagofirstnaz.org](http://www.chicagofirstnaz.org), click on Resources, click the tab Series, find and click on the series title, find and click on the date you want, and then click on the *Background Notes* link at the lower left. You may also pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the Information desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

**Eucharist**

1. Using a hardcopy of the *Background Notes* or online dictionary, explain the meaning of the word “Eucharist,” and explain how this meaning is an appropriate way to refer to the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion.

2. What are some the most basic reasons we take Communion? In what way is doing so a “re-telling” of the original story of Jesus’ death for us? Why are such re-tellings important events in our Christian experience?

3. Eucharist has its roots in the ancient Jewish feast called Passover. Refer to the *Background Notes* for this week, and review the importance of Passover (or Pesach) to the Jewish people. How is the Passover story similar to the Jesus story?

4. Paul has preserved for us the main traditional account of the first Eucharist meal, embedded as it was, in the Passover Seder. Read what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28. Briefly list the key purposes for taking the Lord’s Supper, as set forth in Paul’s account.

5. Explain the meaning of the phrase “in remembrance of me.” How does this differ from a simple “fond memory of Jesus”? How can we “remember” since we weren’t present for the original events surrounding Jesus’ death?

6. Why does Paul say “As often as you eat…drink”? Does this imply frequency of observance?

7. How can taking Communion helps us keep our lives in good order before the Lord?

8. What connection does Paul make between Communion and the Second Coming of Jesus? Compare this with Matthew 26:29 and comment on the similarity.

9. Make a few observations noting how Baptism and Communion are different, and how they serve different purposes in the Christian life. How does 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 bring these two sacraments together, and how does the example of Moses and Israel help us make the connections?

10. Why is it important to instruct and prepare children to receive their First Communion? How do the follow texts lend support to the idea of doing so (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16)?

11. What does a child need to know in order to meaningfully share in the sacrament? Have you talked with your child about First Communion?

12. What misunderstandings might some people have about taking the sacrament? How might you address those in light of what the Bible teaches?