

COMMUNION ENCOUNTER

PARENT AND ADULT NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

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WELCOME!

Welcome to what hundreds of adults and children have found to be a meaningful experience as they share the faith and talk about what the meaning of the Sacraments is! Relax! Be yourselves! Use these booklets as YOU want to in order to make your discussions with children who are special to God and to you a growing time for you and for them. Have fun! Don't worry about making mistakes. God has used imperfect people since the creation to get the message of salvation across. There is a Holy Spirit, count on this presence! Don't be afraid to admit, "I don't know. ", and then go on to say, "Let's see if we can find out.". Do it.

THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is designed to get "harder" as you get into it. Younger children will need to have you "tell about what is written" in a way that they will understand, and to help them read things for themselves. It is not intended to be a "workbook" in which the most important thing is to fill in all the blanks. It is meant to be a tool which you use as you decide, and which you adapt to each child's particular needs.

TIME FRAME

Take your time going through this experience! It is not something to "cram" into a couple of days to get it done. Let the child set the pace, but at the same time, help them to "stay on track" and not simply forget about it. If you are working with more than one child, they may work at a different pace from one another. That's OK

PRIVACY/RESPECT

You are encouraged to share your ideas and experiences with the children you are working with, and they with you. If either of you have things you do not want to share, respect each other's privacy. Be careful about sharing with others statements you have found "cute" or "funny" without the permission of the person(s) you are working with. If the child or younger person does not want to share their work (or some part of it) with you, let them know you are interested in sharing as much of it as they would like to, when and if they are ready.

BLANK AND EXTRA PAGES

The backs of each page are intentionally blank. This gives the children the chance to draw on them, add pictures, or other remembrances, draw their own illustration, or just have fun. You might also want to add extra blank pages on which you could have people who attend the First Communion sign their names, add comments, etc.

MATERIALS YOU MAY NEED

1. A Bible
2. Pen or pencil
3. Communion Encounter booklets for each child and for you
4. Notebooks for adults and children in which to put their booklets and other items collected.
5. Plastic sleeves in which you can put correspondence, pictures, mementos, etc.
6. Stickers, pictures from magazines, etc. of things, people, and activities your child likes to paste or stick on various pages and the cover of the notebook
7. Colored pens, pencils, or markers

SOME OTHER POSSIBILITIES

1. Take videos of your preparation for and celebration of First Communion, including time spent working in preparation and your interviews.
2. Take “field trips” to where the child was baptized. . . To meet the pastor or person who baptized him/her . . . To meet and visit with sponsors . . . etc.
3. Scan the completed Communion Encounter booklet and put it on your computer. Older children may want to do the booklet on computer.

THE FOLLOWING NOTES CORRESPOND TO THE PAGES IN THE "COMMUNION ENCOUNTER" BOOKLET

PAGE ONE

You can review the **Service of Holy Baptism** by looking at page 121 in the front part of the Lutheran Book of Worship. You will note that the pastor talks about the expectations of parents and sponsor under #6, and asks, "Do you promise to fulfill these obligations?" You may want to talk about the ways you have tried to fulfill these responsibilities. Most of us have found them to be more than obligations. They are part of the joy of having a child, and it is good to let your child know this. If you have some colored pencils or markers, you may want to encourage the child to color the pictures.

PAGE TWO

The word, **"holy"**, is used a lot in the Bible and in the life of the Church. The Bible talks about the ground Moses is walking on as "holy"...The Children of Israel are encouraged to see themselves as a "holy people"... The Sabbath Day is to be kept "holy... The Name of the Lord is to be held as holy, etc. Substitute the word, "special" for "holy" and see how it makes these phrases meaningful. The word, "holy" really means that something or someone is "set apart for a special purpose". It does not necessarily mean to be sinless, perfect, or religious. We talk about the "Holy" Catholic Church, and we realize that it is made up of sinners who are "holy" because we are forgiven and are special to God. In Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper, God is saying, "You are holy... special... to Me!" Remind the child that s/he is holy/special to God and to you, even though they don't get everything right. You know God loves you like this and you love the child in this way. We all hope our children love us in the same way!

There is a lot of "print" on this page. You may want to give the child some stickers of things s/he likes and sees as special to paste on the blank spaces on the sides, top, and bottom of the page. Do similar things with any pages you would like to.

PAGE THREE

Add more "balloon faces" to the blank page across from this page to include more people. Use colored yarn and paste it to each "balloon" where the lines are drawn.

PAGE FOUR

Talk about the many feelings of celebrations. For example, of how at a birthday you may be excited about you is there and the presents you are getting. At the same time, you may be lonesome for someone who couldn't be there with you. You may be thankful for something nice that was said or given to you. You may spend some time

remembering past birthdays. On the facing blank page encourage your child to draw all kinds of faces that one might see at a celebration. And of the different looks that might be on their own faces as they think of different things. Invite them to tell you about their feelings and/or the feelings they have drawn.

"COMMUNION" means "togetherness". Add, **"HOLY"** to it, and it comes out, **'SPECIAL**

TOGETHERNESS" When we are at Holy Communion we celebrate our "special togetherness" with God and with each other. We are even together in Christ with people who are not able to be with us physically! There is a oneness that brings Christians together who are separated by miles and even years What a "party"!

The **heart with the cross in it** reminds us of something important! Turn with your child to John 3:16 (the third book of the New Testament, the third chapter, the sixteenth verse) and talk about how *much* God loves us. Invite the child to color the heart red to remind us that Jesus gave His blood His life for us. The **circle with sin crossed out** reminds us that God "cross out" or forgives us our sin because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus paid for the guilt we have because of our sin, so we don't have to. This is especially important because there is no way we can pay for the hurt our sin causes.

PAGE FIVE.

There is a lot of print on this page, and a lot of deep thinking is called for. You may want to do it a little at a time. You may want to add stickers or pictures of people praying, getting into trouble, or being comforted.

Your child may want to do his/her lists of sins that need to be forgiven on a separate page This enables them to not include them when they show others their notebook if they choose to keep them private. They may not want to show you this page or they may feel good about sharing it with you. Respect their choice.

This is an opportunity to discuss how the "sins" we show on the outside come from the "sin" that is on the inside. For example: If the sin we show on the outside is to hit a brothers or sister, what might the sin on the inside be? Some possible responses from the child might be, "I am jealous of him/her" "I am angry enough to want to hurt them." "I want to make them do what I want" Etc.

Other examples of how the "sin on the inside shows itself on the outside" are these: The worm hole on an apple is not there because the worm is going in, but because the worm is coming out! (or so I've been told!). The rash from Chicken Pox is not what is wrong with the person, but is caused by the sickness. The sin on the inside is what causes us to sin on the outside. God's forgiveness of us is from the "inside out"!

In the Old Testament one of the way sin is described is to "miss the mark". To be less than God intends us to be. However you look at it, sin destroys life and relationships. You may want to discuss this with your child by saying something like, "How does it spoil things when we . . ."

The Lord's Supper has a lot to do with "remembering". Jesus invited us to "eat the bread" and "drink the wine" to "remember" Him. **"Remember"** has a very special meaning in the Bible. It means to **"make real in the present that which happened in the past."** When we receive the bread and the wine of the sacrament, God makes Jesus and his death on the cross "real" to us in the present! When God speaks of "not remembering" our sin anymore, it means God is not going to keep the guilt of our sin "real" in our now. It does not mean that God has "lost His memory", but that God does not "rub our noses" in the messes we made yesterday. Jesus paid for our sin on the cross, therefore we are free to enjoy today as people who are forgiven!

The **exercise to be done on the facing page** or on a separate sheet calls for the child to think about three things:

1. Sins s/he is glad God is forgiving, letting us leave behind in yesterday.
2. Sins s/he really hope others will let go of (this may include those noted in #1)
3. Times when s/he feels "sinned against". These are the things they may be having trouble letting go of that others have done to them. When we hold grudges we are holding on to sin that God wants us to let go of because they spoil the lives of others and our today's as well.

You may want to do your own sheet and to share it with your child Or not share it, as you may choose. You are investing in trust that will be invaluable as the years go by!

PAGE SIX

The picture on the top right is an example of how to match the name with the picture. The sample pictures **"Holy Communion"**, or a time of togetherness. The picture on the left shows people giving thanks for Jesus' gift of Himself. This is called, **"Eucharist"**, and reflects one of the many moods of the Lord's Supper. The final picture is meant to be something like the familiar picture of Jesus and the disciples at the **Lord's** or **Last Supper**.

At the bottom of the page are pictures reminding us of the **two Sacraments** of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. All of these would be good pictures to color.

PAGE SEVEN

The word, **GRACE**, is one of the most important ones to know the meaning of! One definition is given in the student's book. An old acrostic that helps some remember what grace is goes like this:

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

Pictured at the top of the page is soda being poured from a bottle. To add to the fun, you may actually want to pour your child a glass of his/her favorite soda or juice. As you do so, point out how the bottle and the glass are like a sacrament. They are the means by which you receive the drink. Something like Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ways in which God pours out His love to us, or "**Means of Grace**". It is not a like getting a dose of medicine that you must take, but it is like being offered a treat that we get to receive. It can add to the "Communion" to invite others to share in a glass of soda or juice with you, and have all talk about the Means of Grace!

PAGE EIGHT

You may want to give your child stickers or have him/her look in magazines for pictures to cut out and paste one this page that remind them of the physical things in Baptism or the Lord's Supper. The kinds of things to look for would be things showing people playing in, drinking, washing in water. Other things could be wheat growing, bread being made or advertised, wine being served. Note: You will have to decide about the wine, but in cultures where wine is used as a sacred substance there seems to be less abuse of it than where it is just seen as a drink.

PAGE NINE

When answering **question #3, "Who was there when I was baptized?"**, include not only the pastors and other people who were standing by the baptismal group, but special people who came to worship with you and to celebrate. This is a good time to bring out some pictures, and perhaps to add them to the blank page facing this sheet. It is also a time to bring out other **mementos** such as the baptismal certificate, candle, towel, shell, etc.

Some children were baptized in the hospital in what is sometimes called an "**emergency baptism**". This is often done when it is possible that the child will not live long enough to be baptized at a regular worship service. If this is the case with your child, it is good to explain that you were not afraid that God might not love your little baby unless s/he were baptized. Just the opposite! The baptism was another

way of showing God's love for one of God's little ones who happened to be struggling for life. It also was a way for mom and dad to pass on all the love they could to their very "holy/special" child! We often have a special time at worship when we publicly affirm the "emergency" baptism. It also becomes a time of thanksgiving and celebration of life! If your child received an "emergency baptism" but did not have a service to affirm it, you may want to have a time now when you gather with family and friends to celebrate the baptism and to say "thanks" for the gift of Baptism. Follow it with a party, if you would like to. Celebration is a big part of the life of a Christian.

PAGE TEN

There are several **letters to sponsors** in the back part of the "Communion Encounter" booklet. There are several ways to do the letter to sponsors:

1. The easiest way is to simply fill in the blanks on the form letters provided and mail them. The sender could "warm up" the letter by adding a short personal note and/or a picture. This is a good time to tell the date of First Communion and invite the sponsor to be with you for it,
2. The child could copy the letter in his/her own writing Or Email it! Add what you wish.
3. You could make this an interview But be sure to use the questions in the letter and have the sponsor, the child, or someone else write down the answers so they can be looked at in the years to come. You may also want to make a video of the interview to add to a video diary of First Communion.

Whatever you do, be sure to get something that can be referred to in later years! Many of us wish that we had such a record to look back on after our godparents are no longer around for one reason or another!

PAGE ELEVEN

If the child's grandparents are available, ask them this question as well. Ask all the people you want to You might be pleasantly surprised at the answers. If you or others would like to, write the answers down on paper for your child, or include them on the videotape.

PAGE TWELVE

In this part of the Communion Encounter we are emphasizing the **"real presence"** of Christ that comes to us in two ways during the Lord's Supper:

1. Christ Jesus comes **in the bread and the wine** in a way that is unexplainable. As Luther once noted, God comes to us everywhere and in everything, but in the sacraments God comes to us in a special way. What God's presence does is different in each way that our Lord is part of our lives. The bread and the wine remain bread and wine, but in the communing they become, "holy" or "special."
2. Christ also comes to us **in other Christians**. In the Bible we are told that God in Christ live in each and every one of us. God is one with us. Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always..." If we want to welcome Jesus in the bread and the wine, we also want to welcome the presence of Jesus in other Christians! Sometimes people don't want our forgiveness or won't forgive us. That is their choice, all we can do is what St. Paul says, "...so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18)

PAGE THIRTEEN

This is a page to have fun with! Your child may want to invite people to draw their own faces and add their own names. Another idea is to cut out old photos of people and glue them in place here.

PAGE FOURTEEN

Invite your child to draw a picture on the page facing this of Jesus welcoming us all to the Communion Table. You might also help him/her to find a picture in a Bible coloring book of Jesus at the Last Supper and add it here after coloring it.

Much is made in this section of our being "invited" to the Table of the Lord. We emphasize that the **Sacraments are not rules to be obeyed or conditions** to be fulfilled, but they are **"GIFTS" FROM GOD TO US!** They are God saying, "I love you!" "I forgive you!" "I have things for you to do and be!" We don't ever want to turn them into something legalistic. Questions like, "Do you HAVE to be baptized?", and, "How often MUST you receive the Lord's Supper?" reflect the rules idea. The real question is, "How much do we NEED and WANT God's love and forgiveness ... Jesus special presence in the bread and the wine?" We GET to be baptized and we are "WELCOMED" to the Lord's Table!

The prayer at the bottom of page 15 is one that beginning readers may need help **with**. Have them read what they can, and help them to learn the words they don't understand. Ask what each sentence means to them. You may want to put it on a bigger sheet, and place it where you can all see it at the same time, while you hold hands and pray. Another option is to "make up" your own prayer with your child or add to it what you may want to it is your time of prayer together so do as you will!

I hope you have found this experience to be meaningful! Please pass on to me any comments or suggestions you may have, and experiences you are willing to share.

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