

First Communion

A Teaching/Learning Idea Enjoyed

This exercise has been used with fifth graders who are preparing to receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time. While it might well be used in a variety of other connections, this particular setting seems especially well suited for reasons that will be discussed.

I have always taught First Communion instruction in a retreat setting, either over Friday night and Saturday morning or through most of a Saturday, instead of several shorter class periods over a period of days or weeks. I believe that more can be accomplished in that extended single experience than in trying to regroup several times around a single topic.

Some of the time is, as it should be, given over to specific instruction, Biblical and practical. But two highlights have marked the day for me.

The first is our visit to a nursing home for some time with individual residents. This is not a drop in, but rather we make dates with certain individuals who are known to be people of faith and are willing to share with young people. Over the years that blessed list has included a dear woman, quite advanced in years, who could not see, hear, or speak. But what she shared by touching our hands was unmistakably understood by each. Many others have touched us in their own ways with their stories. We come not to bring our presence but rather to receive, and that is its own gift for each of us.

That time is followed by a meal shared. Then we are up to our collective elbows in wheat flour, honey, water, and a few other ingredients that will constitute the next morning's offering of the body of our Lord for the congregation's worship.

A lot of energy is expended. But it always amazes and humbles me to see the openness of ten year olds to soak it all up. That is a wonderfully and unashamedly inquisitive age when folks are not yet shattered by onset of adolescence, suspicious of any attempt by adults to foist some undesirable new adultery upon them. Huzzahs to the wisdom that reshaped our communion practices this way!

Blessings,

Bill and Ann