

# Preparing for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion



***"I would highly recommend SIGNS OF GRACE—the quality of each session, the variety, the diverse activities and presentations. That's very engaging for second grade kids."***

**Dot Bowler**

DRE, St. Paul Parish, Hingham, MA

The second graders at St. Paul Parish in Hingham, Massachusetts were just two months away from making their First Holy Communion when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shutdown of in-person classes in the late winter of 2020.

With the date for First Communion up in the air and casting about for a way for parents to continue their children's preparation for the sacrament at home, St. Paul's Director of Religious Education, Dot Bowler, made a call to the Augustine Institute.

"I needed something desperately," said Bowler, who learned that the Augustine Institute was making its First Holy Communion preparation program, SIGNS OF GRACE: You Are Loved, available online.

Between March and their eventual outdoor First Communions in September, the parish's second graders learned about the Eucharist



**"The videos were high quality, and really engaged the parents and kids. My son loved the program, and would ask to complete another lesson."**

**Parent**

through the program's lessons, activities, stories, prayers, and quizzes. St. Paul's volunteer catechists kept in touch with parents via monthly or bi-monthly Zoom calls. The parents and catechists also had access to *Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist*, a four-part video series that explores the truth of Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist.

In early September, Bowler sent an online survey to the parents of the First Communicants to ask how they had liked the program. Asked to rate the program overall on a scale of one to five, parents gave **SIGNS OF GRACE** a score of 4.71. When asked if the parish should use the program again, the 31 respondents unanimously responded, "Yes."

One parent commented on her son's "excitement for learning about the Church and God."

Another said, "My child loved learning about what actually happens during transubstantiation."

A third quoted her child: "I feel like this whole thing made me a better person, and I get God."

Some parents commented on the *Presence* portion of the program.

"I enjoyed the parent videos," one said. "They explained things well so that we could, in turn, help our kids."

Perhaps the greatest compliment for **SIGNS OF GRACE** came on the day of First Communion.

"What was most outstanding to all of us at First Communion was the reverence of both the parents and the children when they went up to receive the Eucharist," Bowler said. "It was noticed by everyone—catechists and priests."



To learn more, contact **Brian Truckenbrod**  
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