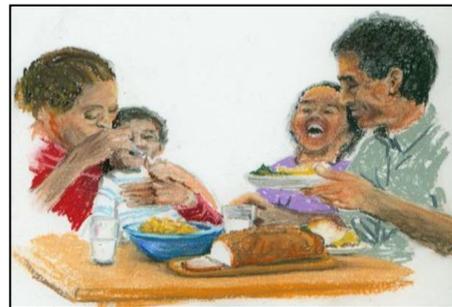


Get Ready! Get Set!

The final retreat and rehearsal
for parents and their children before First Holy Communion



Mark Hakomaki

Providing an experience of coaching parents
to prepare their own children
in this final period of preparation

Leisa Anslinger & Bill Huebsch

Introduction.

This is a flexible-schedule retreat and plan for the final rehearsal for parents and their children as they prepare to receive Holy Communion for the first time. Parents and children live together most of the time. They encounter one another daily. Even if the family is split between more than one home, they're in touch with each other frequently.

But in this final retreat and rehearsal for First Holy Communion, we want to give them a unique experience of being together, one in which we coach the parents to talk with their child about faith. This **final lesson** before Holy Communion will be formation that lasts a lifetime, for both the parents and their kids.

When we coach parents like this, the parents get to know their own faith better. They learn side-by-side with their children. Building on the anticipation and attention of parents during preparation for First Holy Communion, this is the perfect time to begin or deepen the process of coaching. Here's just a bit of what happens during this time:

- ▶ Parents are naturally anxious for their children as they prepare to receive Penance or Holy Communion for the first time;
- ▶ Coaching not only alleviates some of the nervousness but also involves parents in the learning circle. Parents are relieved to know what their children are learning, and they appreciate the way the coaching process respects and honors their role as the primary influence in the faith growth of their child;
- ▶ Catholic parents acquire language with which to talk with their children about sacraments, faith, and their lives;
- ▶ Parents who are not Catholic receive a warm welcome. Coaching is a perfect opportunity to help them understand more about what we believe and why, in a way that values their presence and participation;
- ▶ Parents begin to see catechists and coaches as partners, not as replacements. This also increases the parents' openness to continued connection with the community of faith, and to returning for future coaching sessions;
- ▶ Children and parents form a deeper bond and strengthen the household of faith.

If you already have a retreat day that includes your rehearsal for First Holy Communion, this outline will give you a way to also make that time into an opportunity to coach parents, maybe for the first time. If you're already using **Growing Up Catholic** or another First Communion prep resource in which coaching plays a central role, then you may not need to use that element of this plan. Note: If you already use **Growing Up Catholic**, this outline uses lesson 5 of the program as part of the day, adapted for this purpose.

Getting set up for this event

This packet includes:

- ▶ The outline of the day, with all the preparation notes you will need;
- ▶ The handouts for parents and children;
- ▶ A timeline for the day, for smaller groups and for larger groups.

The outline of the day:

Sample Retreat Timeline. For larger groups with more than one track of parents/children running simultaneously, see the next page.

Time	Activity	Notes
9:15	Arrival, nametags, table assignments, settle in	
9:30	Welcome, Focus and Opening Prayer	
10:00	Coaching Parents, using the Lord's Prayer and Kiss of Peace lessons -- at tables	
10:45	Break -- snack, restrooms, movement to next space	
11:00	Walk-through of church and Mass	
11:45	Rehearsal Prayer at Tabernacle	
12:30 (optional activity)	Children: Craft Parents: Reflection	
1:15 (earlier if you do not do the activity just above)	All return for Closing Prayer, final notes and dismissal <i>Send home:</i> All the handouts used in the retreat + other notes from you regarding the liturgy	

Large group adaptation:

If your group is large enough to need to divide into smaller groups, consider adjusting the above timeline as illustrated below. Each group may be comprised of children who will receive First Holy Communion at the same Mass or on the same weekend.

Time	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
9:15	Arrival	Arrival	Arrival
9:30	Welcome, Focus and Opening Prayer (in church)	Welcome, Focus and Opening Prayer (in church)	Welcome, Focus and Opening Prayer (in church)
10:00	Lessons at Table	Walk-through of church and Mass	Walk-through of church and Mass (start in a different area than Group 2)
10:45	Break and move	Break and move	Break and move
11:00	Walk-through of church and Mass	Children: Craft Parents: Reflection	Lessons at Table
11:45	Break and move	Break and move	Break and move
11:45	Practice Prayer at Tabernacle	Lessons at Table	Practice Prayer at Tabernacle
12:30	Children: Craft Parents: Reflection	Practice Prayer at Tabernacle	Children: Craft Parents; Reflection
1:15	Closing Prayer, final notes and dismissal <i>Send home:</i> All the handouts used in the retreat + other notes from you regarding the liturgy	Closing Prayer, final notes and dismissal <i>Send home:</i> All the handouts used in the retreat + other notes from you regarding the liturgy	Closing Prayer, final notes and dismissal <i>Send home:</i> All the handouts used in the retreat + other notes from you regarding the liturgy

Preparation notes

Choose your team. For this retreat, you'll need catechists who can coach the parents as they work at their tables on the **final lesson**, tour leaders for the tour of the church and the rehearsal walk-through of the Mass, and people to provide hospitality.

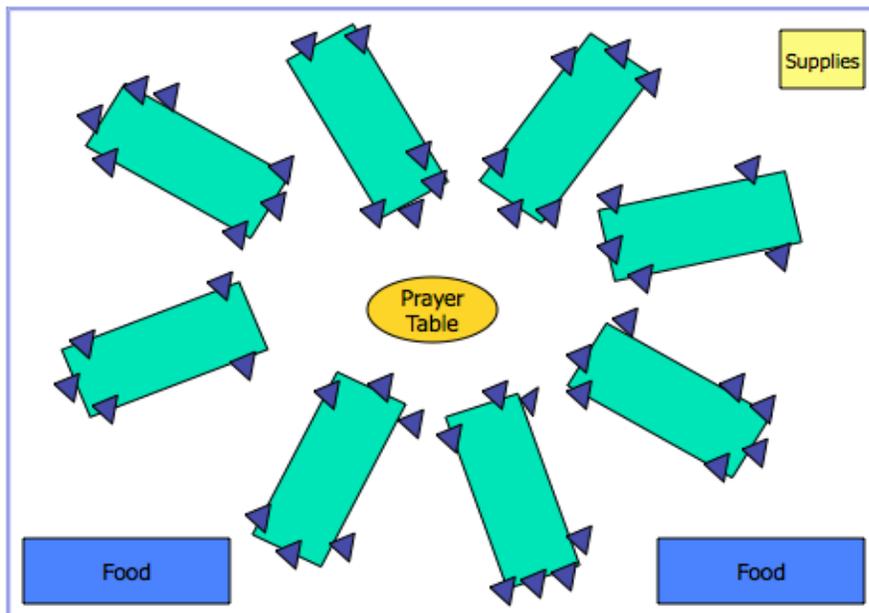
1. **Coaches** – These can be your regular catechists, and you'll need about one per every two or three tables of parents and children. The role of the coach is to be on hand to support parents who need it, but not to interfere if the parents seem to be getting along on their own. The parents are the primary teachers during the lesson; the coaches are there to assist – and not replace – the parents.

2. **Tour leaders** for the tour of the church. We provide the “tour guide” for you below, along with a handout for participants. These folks will be the local leader for this tour.

3. **Mass guides.** There will also be a rehearsal walk-through of the Mass. If you will stay in one group, two Mass guides will be sufficient; if you will break into smaller groups, one to two guides per small group will be needed.

You'll also need space in which to hold this event. Because it's also a rehearsal, folks will be moving throughout the building, so this cannot happen simultaneously with other events, such as funerals or weddings. You'll need:

4. **A room with tables** for the lesson part of the retreat. If your room has round tables, still place the prayer table in the center and position the tables around it. If the room has long, rectangular tables, set them up like this:



Locate your prayer altar as much in the center of the room as possible. People will be asked to approach it with slips of paper during the Prayer Celebration.

Give families privacy by seating them in clumps around the end of rectangular tables or on the sides of round tables. It will be pretty tough to do this day without tables.

To print beforehand

You'll also need to have on hand the supplies for the coaching lesson, handouts printed from the materials in the appendix of this kit.

- ▶ **Make copies** of the lesson handouts (from this kit) and have them ready. You may wish to create a packet for each household. You'll need:
 - The child's handout
 - The parents' handout (with wrap-around steps)
 - The catechist materials for this lesson. This is lesson 5 of First Eucharist preparation from **Growing Up Catholic**, adapted for this purpose.

To do beforehand

- ▶ **Review** the entire retreat.
- ▶ **Seating plans.** Also have seating diagrams and the materials you will need for your First Holy Communion rehearsal.
- ▶ **Prepare a Prayer Altar** for your space. Use whatever you wish, but always include a Bible, candle, and Cross. Have the Bible lying open to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 for the Prayer Celebration.
- ▶ **Have your supplies on hand:** crayons for the children, pens or pencils for everyone, & Bibles to share on the tables.
- ▶ **Choose a Leader for the Prayer.** This might be you, or someone else from your team.
- ▶ **Choose a Reader for the Prayer Celebration.** Ask him or her to prepare beforehand.
- ▶ **Have sacred music playing quietly** as people arrive. It helps reduce discomfort from awkward silence. Because so much of this day is based on interaction between parent and child, you may wish to allow background music to provide white noise which helps create privacy. Turn the music off during the Prayer Celebration.
- ▶ **Provide a drink and snack,** located at a convenient spot in or near the meeting room. Food always helps make people feel comfortable.
- ▶ **Arrange for use of the church.** Be sure to schedule the use of the worship space early in the year.

Retreat Timing

- ▶ The retreat takes approximately four hours, so it could be held in the late afternoon into the evening, or on a Saturday or Sunday. Our experience is that the weekend is more conducive to the retreat experience, but any time is better than none!

Retreat Elements

- ▶ Welcome
 - You will help everyone focus on the theme of this event
 - You will lead a brief opening prayer (provided in this kit)
 - ▶ A lesson at the tables
 - This is where you will coach parents to guide their own child through a “final lesson” for First Holy Communion using a session from **Growing Up Catholic**
 - ▶ A walk-through tour of the church
 - Your tour guides will provide this
 - With a moment of prayer for each at the Tabernacle
 - ▶ A guided demonstration of the Mass
 - ▶ The rehearsal for the First Communion Liturgy
 - ▶ (optional activity) A craft for children and reflection for parents
 - ▶ The closing prayer, any final notes from you, and dismissal
- ❖ For groups of 30 or fewer children: All of the children and parents can move together through the retreat experience.
- ❖ For groups of 30 or more: It will be beneficial to follow the staggered scheduling for the elements of the event, as presented on the schedule above.

Time	Activity	Notes
9:15	Arrival, nametags, table assignments, settle in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Welcome everyone warmly. ▶ Be sure to give a special welcome to any non-Catholic parents who may be present. ▶ Have sacred music playing quietly as folks arrive. This helps create an atmosphere of comfort. A silent church hall may feel more like a morgue to some people! ▶ Have beverages and snacks available as people arrive, especially if they’re coming after school on a weeknight. ▶ Ask your team and pastoral staff (including the parish priests) to join with the people. It creates a bit of discomfort if they merely linger at the edges of the room. ▶ Have the room where this event is held clearly marked. ▶ Have name tags and seating arrangements in place and all materials on the tables in advance.
9:30	Welcome and focus 3-4 minutes total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When the time comes, welcome everyone and give them a brief (just a moment or two) description of the plan for the retreat so they know what to expect.

		<p>Focus: about 5 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Introduce the retreat-rehearsal briefly using these or similar words: <p>We are gathering today as a group of families, with our children who are preparing for First Holy Communion, in order to undertake one “final lesson” with them. What makes this lesson so special is that it is one that you parents will lead.</p> <p>Oh, don’t worry. We’re not asking you to do something that’s impossible. We’ll be here to coach and assist you, but this “final lesson” will be between you and your child. We’ll also have a tour of the church, a demonstration of the Mass, and a rehearsal for the First Communion liturgy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invite all the parents and children now to get started using their handouts. Parents should introduce their child to the first page.
	<p>Opening Prayer</p> <p>10-12 minutes total</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Once the families have begun, allow them just a minute or two to look at page one, then when it seems time, gather them at the prayer table, following the direction in the catechist pages. ▶ This prayer is on page 2 of the child’s materials. ▶ Begin with the Sign of the Cross, prayed aloud in unison, as it is on the prayer page. ▶ Follow this with a sacred song if you wish, one that everyone can sing. Invite a parish musician to assist you. ▶ The homily and leader notes are in the catechist pages. ▶ You’ll also need pens & small pieces of paper on which all present will write their commitment as part of the prayer.
9:50	<p>Coaching Parents: pages 3-8 of the child pages</p> <p>Lessons done at the tables</p> <p>40-45 minutes, more or less</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ After the prayer, and after everyone has returned to their place at the tables, guide the families to the Our Father exercise on page 3 of the child pages. ▶ As they finish this, they can move on to page 4, the Kiss of Peace. ▶ Families can then move on to the Scripture lesson and the final pages ▶ It’s a good idea to keep the whole group moving at a similar pace.
10:40 or so	<p>Break movement to next space</p>	

11:00	Tour of the parish church and guided demo of the Mass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Using the guide we provide, set everyone off on their tours. It's best to keep these tour groups to about 10 people each if possible. Each group can begin at a different point in the church. ▶ During the tour, each group will come to the Tabernacle. The tour guide should pause here and invite everyone to a moment of sacred prayer. This is an excellent time for a brief, quiet prayer and a reminder that Jesus is present there. If your parish has perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or sometimes offers holy hour, one of the regular participants may lead the prayer at the retreat for a good community connection. ▶ After the tour, gather your whole group for a quick demo on the Mass. If you have a parish priest available, or another member of the pastoral team, you may wish to employ them here. If not, choose a suitable leader for this demo.
11:45	Rehearsal for the Liturgy of First Communion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Have your seating chart ready! ▶ Gather everyone in the vestibule and begin with the entry procession. ▶ Have in mind that many of these adults may not come to Mass very often. ▶ Be ready to answer questions about reception of Communion by those outside of full communion. ▶ Most parishes include some rehearsal of the details of the liturgy, including how to receive the Blessed Sacrament and (if offered in your parish) the Precious Blood. They will also be able to reinforce at home what was taught during the retreat. In the multiple-group option, two groups practice together. If the groups each represent children who will receive First Holy Communion at different Masses, give each smaller group an opportunity to walk-through separately.
12:30 (optional activity)	Children: Craft Parents: Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Often parishes already have customs around the immediate preparation for First Holy Communion. Perhaps the children bake bread, create a memento picture or mosaic, paint a small glass, or make a banner. ▶ If you already have such a custom, the retreat has 45 minutes built in for this activity. If you do not already have a custom such as this, consider some brief craft that could result in a lasting

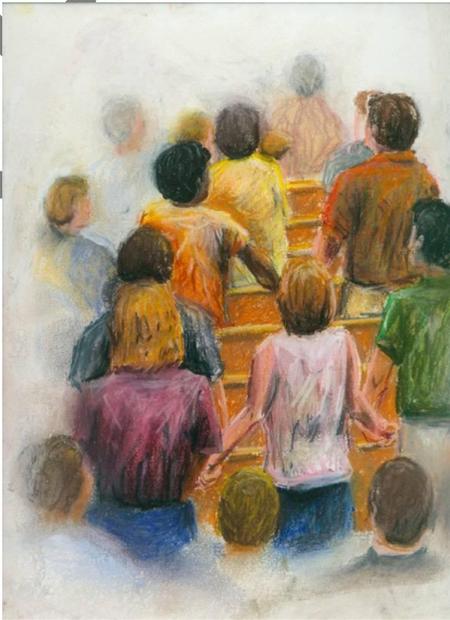
		<p>memory and deeper appreciation of the moment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you decide that a craft requires more preparation than you can muster, you can either skip this part or select an appropriate video for the children to watch and enjoy a snack with each other while the parents participate in their reflection. ▶ Invite the parents to gather together without their children. Ask them to think back over their own journey of faith. This will also help them “connect the dots” with their influence in the growth of faith of their children. The reflection time could include a brief witness by a parent (perhaps the parent of a child who received First Holy Communion last year), notes that lead participants through a reflection on their own journey of faith, and brief sharing with another.
<p>1:15 (earlier if you do not do the activity just above)</p>	<p>All return for Closing Prayer, final notes and dismissal</p> <p><i>Send home:</i> All the handouts used in the retreat + other notes from you regarding the liturgy</p>	<p>Offer any final notes, thoughts, and instructions, and close with a prayer like this:</p> <p>Dear Jesus, we know you are with us here. You are present in this room. We love you and want to love you more. Help us to be more loving this week. Thank you for giving us faith. Increase our faith every day.</p> <p>Now let us pray together:</p> <p>Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.</p> <p>In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.</p>

Church Tour Checklist

Check the box when you have found the items below on your walk-through. In the space provided, write where it is located in church and when it is used at Mass.

Object	Location	When this is used at Mass
Baptismal font or pool		
Holy water font at the door		
Vestibule		
Paschal candle		
Holy Oils		
Reconciliation room		
The nave or worship space, with pews		
Stained glass windows		
The Stations of the Cross		
The Sanctuary		
Altar		
Ambo (Lectern)		
Chair (Priest's or Presider's)		
Tabernacle and candle		
Roman Missal		
Lectionary		
Chalice and paten		

Vestments		
ProceSSIONAL Cross		
Statues of Mary and the Saints, or the life of Christ		
What else did you learn about?		



We gather for Eucharist | Mark Hakomaki

Tour Guide to the Catholic Church

Not all churches look alike! Just as family homes differ from one to the next, so parish churches also reflect the personality and history of the parish. Use these notes for your tour, but adapt them to your own parish setting. You have permission to cut, paste, and shape these as you need to.

The **baptismal pool or font**. Usually at or near the main entrance of the church. Reminds us that every time we come to Eucharist we enter once again the waters of baptism. Baptism is our way of entering the Church. In some churches, the baptismal font stands in the front, near the altar.

When we come into church, we dip our hand in the **holy water font** (or baptismal font if it's handy), and make the Sign of the Cross. We trace on our bodies the sign of our faith, and our agreement at baptism to die to ourselves as we sacrifice ourselves in love for each other.

The **paschal candle** usually stands near the baptismal font. On Holy Saturday night, which we call the Easter Vigil, this candle was blessed by us and now stands as a sign of the Light of Christ. During that prayer, the priest uses these words: "May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life."

We call the entry area of the church the **narthex** or **vestibule**.

Also near the baptismal font, there is a small cabinet in which we keep the **Holy Oils**. This is called the **ambry**. There are three vessels of oil: the **oil of catechumens**, which is used to bless those preparing for baptism; the **oil of the sick**, with which the priest brings Jesus' strength to those who are in serious illness; and the **sacred chrism**, which is used in celebrating the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders.

Somewhere near the back or side of the church is the **reconciliation room**, a small chapel-like room designed for the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. There may also be one or more **confessionals**. These are small cubicles in which we celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation prior to Vatican II.

The large gathering area of the church, where all the people sit for Mass, is called the **nave**. This big room is usually filled with **pews**.

Hanging around the outside walls of the church are the 14 carvings or small images which represent the **Way of the Cross**. This is a series of images which recount the passion story of Jesus, his "way to the Cross."

The center of the church, without doubt, is the **sanctuary**. All eyes are drawn to it.

Standing in an obvious place is the **presider's chair** which is usually accompanied by seating for the other ministers. This seating is arranged so that the presider and other ministers are actually part of the assembly, yet able to perform their proper roles.

There is also here the place from which the readings are proclaimed, called the **ambo**, and the place from which the Gospel is proclaimed and the homily is preached, usually called the **pulpit** or **lectern**. It's here that we put the **lectionary**, the book of readings from Sacred Scripture.

The center of all this is the **table** or the **altar**. This is where we celebrate Mass. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we cover the table with an **altar cloth**. We place the bread and wine for Mass here. The bread is on a **bread plate** or **paten**, and the wine is poured into a **chalice**.

We also always have a **crucifix** in this area of the church. It's usually carried in during the opening of the Mass, along with **candles**, which represent the light of Christ.

Located near the altar, but not on it, is the **tabernacle**. This is where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. Next to the tabernacle is a candle which is kept burning at all times, and this is called the **sanctuary lamp**.

In some churches, there is a **small chapel** nearby in which the tabernacle is kept. This chapel may be used for daily Mass or quiet personal prayer. People make visits to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

In many churches, there are images of Mary and the Saints, or depictions from the life of Christ, either in **stained glass**, painting, frescoes, or statues. Some Catholics light a **votive candle** in front of a statue or shrine as a reminder that their prayers continue even after they leave the church.

If it is an older church, there is a rather elaborate "high altar" against the back wall of the sanctuary. This is called a **rearedos**.

The priest and deacons, and some of the other ministers, wear special clothing when celebrating the liturgy and the sacraments. These are called **vestments**. Under the colorful outer garment at Mass, the priest wears a long white garment which is called an **alb**. The colorful outer garment is called a **chasuble**. The priest also wears a **stole**, a long piece of cloth about four inches wide draped around the neck.

Order of the Mass

The outline below provides a review of the Mass suitable for use in a demo.
The presider and ministers will use these or similar words.

Opening Rites

Entrance Procession

People stand up, the priest goes to the Altar.
Entrance hymn may be sung.

Greeting

(Priest) In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
(Congregation) Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And with your Spirit.

Penitential Rite

My brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.

Or:

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy.

The Gloria

(Hymn of Praise. It may be said or sung)

Opening prayer

Amen.

(All sit down)

Liturgy of the Word

First & Second readings

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Gospel acclamation

To be said or sung
(All stand)

Gospel reading

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

(All be seated)

Profession of Faith

General Intercessions

At the end of each one:
Lord, hear our prayer (or whatever response is suggested)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Collection of Gifts

The Offertory Prayers

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received this bread we offer you, fruit of the earth and work of human hands; it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God forever.

By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you, fruit of the vine and work of human hands; it will become our spiritual drink.

Blessed be God forever.

(Quiet prayer) With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.

Washing of the hands

Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Invitation to pray

Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his holy Church. (All stand up)

Prayer over the gifts

According to the proper of the Mass
Amen.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you
And with your Spirit.

Lift up your hearts
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God
It is right and just.

Preface

At the end all sing or say

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

(All kneel or stand, depending on local custom)

The priest will pray one of the Eucharistic Prayers.

Memorial Acclamation

Final doxology

Rite of Communion

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:
Our Father...

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Kiss of Peace

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace
and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign forever and ever.
Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And with your spirit.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

(All kneel or stand, depending on local custom)

Holy Communion

People receive Holy Communion

The body of Christ
Amen.

The blood of Christ
Amen.

Prayer After Communion

Let us pray
(All stand up)

Amen.

Concluding rite & Dismissal

Announcements and final blessing

The Lord be with you
And with your spirit.
May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
Thanks be to God.