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This weekend we have two young men making their First Holy Communion. It has been my privilege to get to know them and help them prepare for this day.

Jackson is the son of Matt and Laura Parker. He has an older brother, Christian, and they live in Coral. He is a second grader at Lakeview Elementary. Jackson has been very excited for this day to come. He has asked many questions along the way. He wants to really understand what he’s doing. He is not content just going through the motions. He is looking forward to being able to join the ranks of his fellow altar servers.

Colton is the son of Tim and Sarah Benson. He has a younger brother, Sam, and they live in Morley. He attends Crossroads Charter Academy in Big Rapids. Colton is very smart. He knows his content well and makes good connections between learning about and living his faith. He, too, is pleased he can now become an altar server.

May we all remember our own First Communion. I hope that you still feel that same excitement as you approach the Holy Eucharist. Revel in the knowledge that the simple bread and wine has transubstantiated (changed in essence) to become the true body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. While it still presents as bread and wine, just as a picture drawn by a young child and given to a parent or flowers given to your beloved on Valentine’s Day is not *JUST* a picture or flowers, they have taken on so much more meaning that they embody and make tangible the love of the giver. So it is with the Blessed Sacrament. The Holy Eucharist makes God’s love present and perceptible for us. Your consumption of the body and blood unites you with Christ, our Lord, in a way that allows and obliges you to become one. Let Jesus take hold of your heart. Let His physical presence take over your mind. Strive to create a physical environment and mental atmosphere worthy of His indwelling.

As you prepare for Mass, remember to fast from any food and drink (except water and medicine) for one hour. Make sure to be in the proper disposition to receive communion. You should be free of grave sin (lying, missing Mass, theft, adultery, coveting, etc.) If you are not, attend confession prior to Mass and receive Reconciliation. If you cannot make it to confession, you must abstain from receiving until you do so, however, you can still approach the minister of Holy Communion and receive a blessing. Prepare for reception of Holy Communion by saying a prayer such as this: **Dear Lord, may I receive you in this Communion with open arms and a loving, contrite heart so that I may be filled with Your grace, For my good and Your glory! Amen.**

And after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, make sure to give thanks. A popular, formal prayer is the Anima Christi: **Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within Thy wounds, hide me. Separated from Thee let me never be. From the malignant enemy, defend me. At the hour of death, call me to come to Thee, bid me that I may praise Thee in the company of Thy Saints, for all eternity. Amen.** Or you can say something a bit more informal such as: **My Jesus, I love and adore you. You have come to me; I am one with You. I want You to remain with me forever, in this life and in the next. Thank You for allowing me to share Your divine life. May I become more like You through this sacred Food. Let me never take You for granted, but always pray for those whose lives are dark with sin and ignorance and selfishness. Let me remember, in the words of Saint Paul, that "there, but for the grace of God, go I." Each day, I can become more like You, O Lord. And each day I can pray for those who have never heard the Gospel, or who have heard it and rejected it. Amen.**

Blessings,

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