

How to embrace the sacramental season

It's no accident that so many faith milestones take place in the spring. While the new Church year kicks off at Advent, spring is the time that many Catholics mark the beginning or renewal of their sacramental life. It is also good for us to support those receiving the sacraments, and to recommit to our faith and deepen our relationship with God and one another. My springtime resolution this year is simple: Gather and celebrate more.

Baptisms

Obviously, baptisms take place year-round, but this spring I'm resolving to pay closer attention. Our kids and the kids we know are well past the baby years, so baptisms can feel – at best – like a chance to coo over a newborn draped in white. At worst, baptisms can feel like a moment that makes Mass longer when we don't know the family at the baptismal font. Also, I'm resolving to watch out for these new members of our Catholic family (and their bleary-eyed parents) the way we all say we will during the baptismal rite, even if all that means is celebrating in that moment with people I do not know.

First Communions

Woody Allen once said, "Eighty percent of life is showing up." How often do we trudge through a Sunday morning all the way to Communion without ever giving it a thought beyond the pat on the back we give ourselves for getting to the pew? You can bet those kids and adults receiving their first Communion aren't taking it for granted. In the spirit of "go big or go home," I'm resolving to do more than 80 percent. I'm resolving to treat Communion – firsts and every thereafter – in the same spirit we celebrate Easter dinner – that is, with joy and hospitality and singing (even when my voice is still croaky

from disuse).

Confirmations

The Sacrament of Confirmation is unlike any other. No cute babies. No interactive moment like the procession to the altar for Eucharist. No nervous couple about to take their wedding vows. But confirmation is a major rite of passage. In his short story "Shaving," Leslie Norris writes about 16-year-old Barry whose dad is dying. As Barry shaves his father's face, Norris writes: "He had let go all his authority, handed it over. He lay back in his pillow, knowing his weakness and mortality, and looked at his son with wonder, with a curious humble pride." This year, I'm resolving to celebrate the accession of our newest adult Catholics, to listen to them and to ready them to take up where we may have left off.