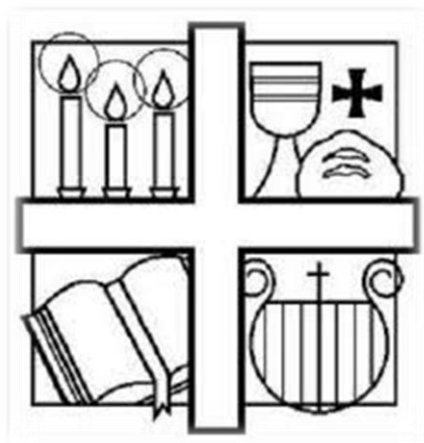


PARENTS
SUPPORT
MEETING



Introduction
to the Sacramental Journey

WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

As we begin this journey of preparation together you are invited to reflect on the following passage from Pope Benedict when he baptised some children and spoke to their parents:



To educate is a very challenging mission, and it is sometimes difficult for our limited human capacities. Education becomes a wonderful mission if it is done in partnership with God, who is the first true educator of every person. The Pope went on to describe parents as “channels” through which the lifeblood of the love of God passes. The Holy Father also underlined the importance of the Holy Spirit saying, "It is very important for you parents, and also godfathers and godmothers, to believe strongly in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, and welcome and invoke the Holy Spirit through prayer and the sacraments.”

“Prayer, the Pope continued, is the first condition to educate, because in prayer we give ourselves to God, we entrust our children to Him, who knows them before and better than us, and knows exactly what their true good is. With prayer and the Sacraments, said Pope Benedict, parents will be able to discern the most appropriate way to educate their children; when to be tender or firm and when to keep silent or to correct.

On the 7th January 2007 Benedict encouraged parents in their great vocation:

Always watch over your little ones, so that they may learn to know God as they grow up, love him with all their strength and serve him faithfully.

May you be their first educators in faith, offering together with your teaching also the examples of a coherent Christian life.

Teach them to pray and to feel as living members of the concrete family of God, of the Church Community

TAKE TIME to REFLECT ON HOW:

- You try to be a channel through which the love of God can be passed onto your children?
- How does prayer help you to be that channel for your child?

WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?



Recall the baptism day of your child, what memories of the day stay with you?

Who did you choose as godparents and why?

What hopes did you have for your child at that time?

How have those hopes become reality?

THE RITE OF BAPTISM and A CALL TO PARENTS

The Rite of Baptism highlights the crucial and irreplaceable role that parents have in passing on our faith, this is why the Rite states:

You have asked to have your child baptized.

In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith.

It will be your duty to bring up your child to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us by loving God and our neighbour.

Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

What kind of support and help do you feel you need today to continue to pass on your faith to your child as they prepare for the celebration of the sacraments of penance, confirmation and holy communion?

COMMUNICATING FAITH in GOD

The struggle and anxiety of parents and grandparents in passing on the faith to their children and grandchildren is a hot topic today.

This struggle is represented by questions of

- how to pray with their children,
- how to answer the moral questions they raised,
- how to share gospel values,
- how to cope with challenging behaviour,
- how to keep children involved in the Mass and the parish
- how to justify being practising Catholics as children begin to rebel.

Here are some parents concerns:

- When I pray with him before he goes to sleep at night should I kneel or is it alright to sit on the bed beside him?
- Catholic parents want to bring their children up in the faith but it's proving very hard. Children are complaining very early that Mass is boring; an awful lot of young people see the Church as irrelevant and it's not just those who have not been taught or brought up properly.
- I need much more help in the faith formation of their children: help finding suitable books, and prayer and worship resources.
- A difficulty? – persuading our 4 year old to go to Mass every Sunday.

What helps you to communicate your faith in God to your child?

How are the struggles above related to your own challenges in this area?

Seven UP



St Francis Xavier has been quoted as saying
'Give me a child when he is seven and I will give you the man!'

This is hopefully not proposing that your character and personality are totally formed by seven years of age, but that at seven years of age the seeds of the adult you will become are sown through the formation of habits that lasts for a life time.

When we talk about Christian formation then at seven years of age we constantly reinforce in our children good habits of the heart which we hope will stay with them for a life time.

Seven year olds begin to reflect on big things in life, often asking the important question WHY? e.g.,

- Why do people do bad things?
- Why do we have to die?
- Why do some people suffer?

Seven year olds also begin to show signs of personal autonomy

- I can do that!
- Let me
- I'll show you

This age is an important milestone in personal growth, this is why the Church also affirms it as milestone in spiritual growth and encourages parents to begin to prepare their children for the completion of their initiation.

A TWO YEAR JOURNEY TOGETHER

Here are some simple things you might do to encourage your child to grow in faith as they prepare for the completion of the sacraments of initiation:

- Encourage your child to talk to God naturally
- When you are in Church help them to engage with the space and its symbols
- Explain why we sit sometimes in Church, stand, kneel, sing and so on
- Place images in the house that point towards your belief in God
- Say simple prayers at the end of the day with your child
- At family meals ask someone to say a prayer at the beginning and the end
- Teach your child to think about others and their needs
- Help your child to make good choices based on the values of the Gospel
- Encourage the whole family to say sorry when they have done something wrong
- Make it a family priority to participate in Mass every Sunday and then celebrate it

Which of the above ideas do you find helpful?

What other habits of the heart could you encourage in your child?

YEAR of RECONCILIATION

The first year of your child's journey of preparation focuses on the sacrament of reconciliation or penance. This sacrament connects us to the call of Christ to live our baptism to the full, helps us to grow in holiness and enables us to become people who discern. This is why it has also been called the sacrament of continual conversion.

In this sacrament the Church imparts the forgiveness of God through the ministry of the priest.

This year will be an opportunity for you as a parent to explore

- What this sacrament means to you as an adult
- How you celebrate this sacrament
- Why it is important to your own journey of faith and growth

so that you will be confident when talking to your child about it, sharing your experience, teaching about this sacrament and leading by example.

There are two parent's formation sessions to help you, the first is called

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT and explores:

- Signs of readiness in your child
- Your own memories
- The different names for this sacrament
- Teaching your child about God's love
- The five stages in the sacrament

The second session is called CELEBRATING WELL which explores:

- The S Word SIN
- Sin and Choice
- Listening to the voice of conscience
- Reflecting on the Prodigal Son parable

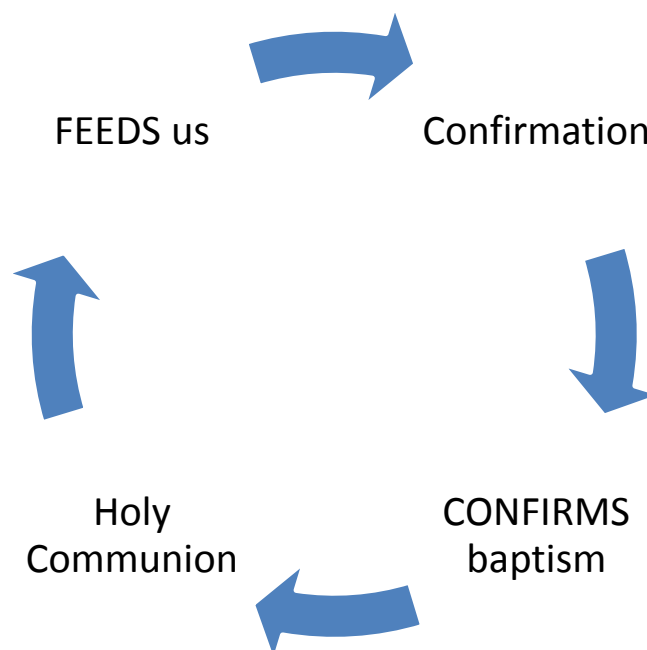
Our school connects with preparation through the following themes in THIS IS OUR FAITH – The Signs of God, The Reign of God and In the Image and Likeness of God

YEAR of COMPLETION of INITIATION

In the second year of the sacramental preparation journey we focus on preparation for the sacrament of confirmation and the celebration of first holy communion.

Confirmation confirms us in the faith we professed at our baptism and strengthens us to reach out to others in service. The grace of this sacrament will help your child to grow strong in faith, helping them to grow into a fully committed Christian who stands up for Gospel values. The reception of confirmation is not so much an end in itself but a new stage in growth for the child whom we hope will continue to be a strong witness to Christ.

The reception of holy communion provides us with nourishment for our ongoing journey of faith. As we are fed by the body and blood of Christ we are given the strength to carry on, walking with him and living in his presence as we grow in faith.



In this year there will be a further set of parents sessions to enable you to reflect more deeply and pass on your faith to your child.

YOUR PARISH DATES:

For the Year of Reconciliation:

Meetings and Liturgies	DATE
First Parent Support Meeting	
Parents Session 1 on Reconciliation	
Advent Family Reconciliation Service	
Parents 2 nd Session on Reconciliation	
Lent Family Reconciliation Service	
Eastertide First Confessions	

For the Completion of Initiation

Meetings and Liturgies	DATE
Parents Session about Confirmation	
Parents Session on First Holy Communion	
Parents Retreat Time	
Confirmation	
Reception of First Holy Communion	
Celebrating Together	

RESOURCES:

Encouraging Children to Pray

www.prayerguide.org.uk/encouragekids.htm

Children Learn to Pray

www.cptryon.org/prayer/child

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS:

- My Little Missal
- Praying at Mass
- My Little Prayer Book
- Getting to Know God
- The Gospel for Little Children
- Praying with the Friends of Jesus
- Praying with the Holy Spirit
- The Way of the Cross for Children

REDEMPTORISTS PUBLICATIONS

- Your Child's First Confession
- Your Child's First Communion
- My Holy Communion
- Let's Go to Mass

PAULINE BOOKS

ACTIVITY BOOKS SERIES – All £1.99

- The Holy Mass
- The Holy Eucharist
- The 7 Sacraments
- Learning my Prayers

DVD's

Welcome to the Mass
Jesus the Good Shepherd

If A Child Lives With. . .

by Dorothy Law Nolte

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, she learns to fight.
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
If a child lives with jealousy, she learns to feel guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance, she learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.
If a child lives with praise, she learns to be appreciative.
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with recognition, she learns that it is good to have a goal.
If a child lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.
If a child lives with fairness, she learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to trust in himself and others.
If a child lives with friendliness, she learns the world is a nice place in which to live.



Another version...

If a child lives in a faith filled environment, she learns how to be full of faith

If a child lives with adults who pray, he learns how to pray

If a child lives in a home filled with forgiveness, she learns how to forgive

If a child lives with parents who know Christ, he learns that Jesus is his friend

If a child grows up celebrating every Sunday, she learns that the Mass is everything

If a child grows up with friends of Jesus, he learns that he too is called to be His friend



Loving God help us to teach our children

that you love us totally and unconditionally.

Help us to encourage our children to grow in faith and love

and to learn from our example

as we seek to follow your Son Jesus every day.

Give us the courage to pray with our children

and to share our faith with them

as we journey together.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN