

# FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

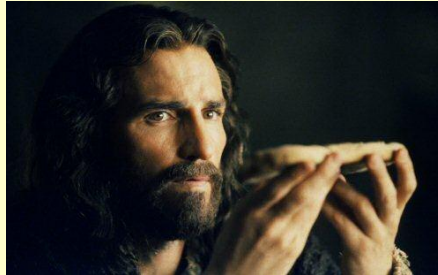
How can we prepare our children?



2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION for PARENTS  
on the Completion of Initiation

## Completion of Initiation

When a child is baptised we hope that they will continue the journey of faith and fully complete their initiation into the life of the Church. This happens when they receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and then finally receive the Eucharist for the first time. Hopefully this will be the beginning of many moments of encounter with Christ.



### WE PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord Jesus, we come to your sacred table to nourish ourselves, not with bread but with Yourself, true Bread of eternal life.

Help us to recognise and celebrate your presence everyday in our lives.

Walk with us on our journey of faith as you once did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Be with our children as they prepare in this year to encounter you more deeply in the celebration of the Eucharist.

For the bread that gives everlasting life so that we can love God with all our strength WE THANK YOU LORD

For the wine that gives everlasting joy and strength to serve our brothers and sisters WE THANK YOU LORD

For offering us your body and blood WE THANK YOU LORD

For the Eucharist that proclaims your glory WE THANK YOU LORD

For you, Christ Jesus, who are always with us WE THANK YOU LORD



## Signs of Readiness

Does your child sometimes

- Want to join in the prayers at Mass?
- Look forward to meeting friends at Mass?
- Try to listen to readings from Scripture at Mass?
- Ask questions about what communion tastes like?
- Talk about when they can take part?
- Join in actions at Mass and sing hymns?
- Want to know more about how we meet Jesus at Mass?
- Ask questions about why the communion host is special?
- Show eagerness about joining in?
- Value occasional moments of stillness and silence?
- Show love to family and friends?
- Exhibit a desire to deepen their love of Jesus?

If you see signs of this in your child's life then they are probably ready to take part fully in Mass and receive Holy Communion.

Pope Pius X taught that when a child is able to recognise that there is a distinction between the Eucharist and ordinary bread then preparation should begin. The Catechism of the Catholic Church links with the child's 'capacity to understand what the mystery of Christ means, and that they are able to receive the body and blood of Christ with faith and devotion.' CCC 913



## The Celebration of Mass: What does it mean to you?

A group of parents in a parish were asked to share what's Mass about for them.

There were a variety of response, here are some:

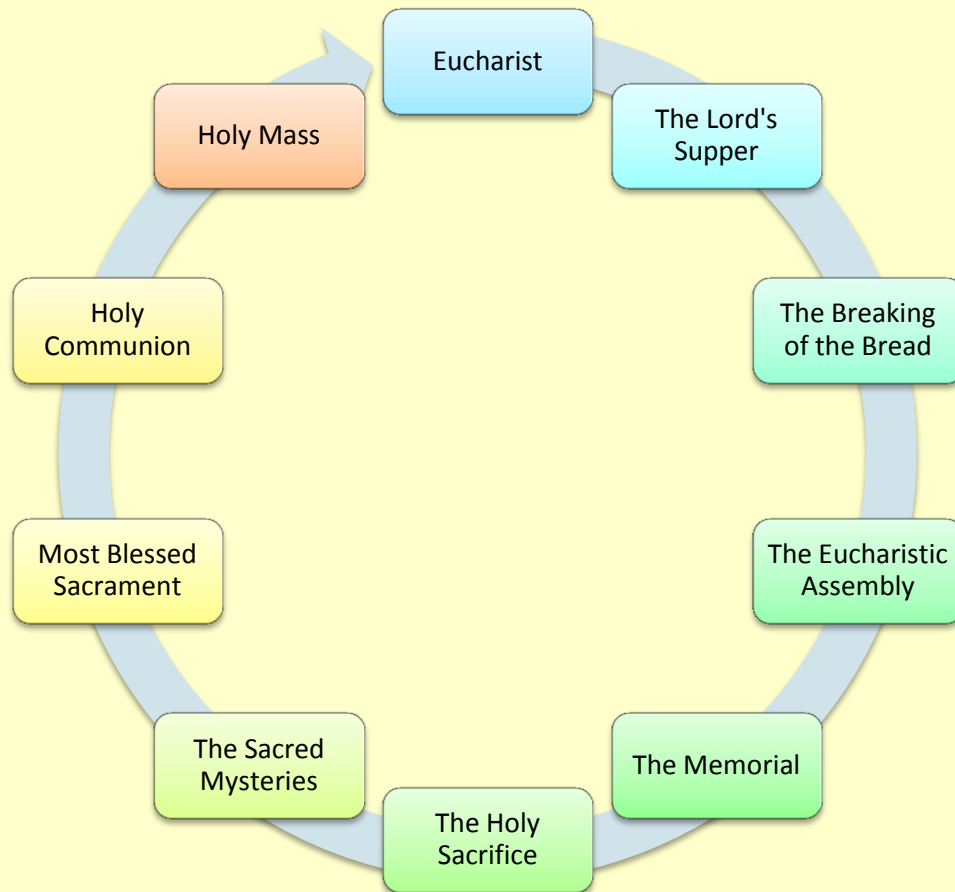
- Mass is the time when I get peace and quiet. It's the only peace I have all week. I really value the space and the time to pray.
- I just come, it's been a habit since childhood. I don't really know why but Mass helps me to make sense of the rest of my life.
- I find Mass very difficult. It's hard to get the kids to settle down. Sometimes we fight all the way to Mass in the car, but I keep persevering as I know that God's in the mess.
- I get great strength from praying with others. I feel part of a bigger community when I come to Mass. My kids need that sense of knowing that they are part of something bigger than our wee family.
- I feel a bond with the parish community when I come to Sunday Mass. The Mass also connects us as a family.
- As a family it helps us to remember God's love for us, and kind of gives us a top up. We all need more love in our lives.
- Since my dad died it all makes more sense for me. Now I have a real sense of what it means each week that we remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He's with us.
- It's very difficult in our world to keep following Jesus. I need to be fed spiritually. At Mass this happens every week when we listen to the words of scripture and receive Jesus in communion.

### *WHAT'S MASS ABOUT for YOU?*

- *How do any of the above answers connect with your experience?*
- *What would you like to share with your child about what Mass means to you?*

# Lots of names for the same celebration

Down the centuries the Church has used a variety of names to try to explain the experience we have. The reception of the holy Eucharist completes our Christian Initiation, where we participate with the whole community in this great sacrament. The Eucharist is called the 'source and summit' of the Christian life. The richness of this sacrament is expressed in the many different names we give it, here are some:



- Eucharist is a Greek word meaning thanksgiving, when we celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday we bless God and thank God for creation, for redeeming us and making us holy.
- When we gather every Sunday we recall the story of the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion, we recall the Lord's Supper.
- We recognize that Christ is with us in the Breaking of the Bread, all of us who eat the one broken bread who is Christ enter into communion with him and form one body with him.

- Because the Eucharist is celebrated in the midst of the gathered assembly, we become one body, one spirit in Christ, so that Christ is present in the Eucharistic Assembly.
- When we pray the Eucharistic Prayer the sacrifice of Christ becomes present to us once more, we then offer this sacrifice of praise to God in thanksgiving as we recall the Holy Sacrifice.
- The expression Sacred Mysteries reminds us that here in this celebration the whole of the Church's life of prayer and worship finds its source.
- We use the phrase Blessed Sacrament as it is the Sacrament of sacraments where Christ is really present to us. When we reserve the Eucharistic species in a tabernacle we also refer to this as the Blessed Sacrament.
- We speak also of Holy Mass because this comes from the Latin phrase for sending out (Missa). We are sent forth from this assembly to share Christ's continued presence with the world and to live this presence in our lives.
- Finally we refer to Holy Communion because we are united to Christ as we share in his Body and Blood to form one single body.

1) What strikes you about any of the above? What's new for you?

2) What prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude do you bring to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist?

3) Which of the above phrases do you find most helpful and why?

# Gathering every Sunday: Why is it so important?



## “On the day called Sunday” by Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165)

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the overseer verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the overseer in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the overseer, who provides for the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.

*This amazing passage describes how the early Christians gathered every Sunday for the celebration of the Eucharist.*

- *What similarities do you see between then and now?*
- *How does your family help each other to make the celebration of Sunday Mass the highlight of the week?*
- *Why is it so important to gather every Sunday?*

# What should we be doing at Mass? Encouraging Participation



Here are some basic principles which help children to feel that they are part of the bigger gathering. These came from a mum who was trying to encourage families to be more conscious of how they encourage children to participate:

## SOME BASIC GROUND RULES:

- 1) Expect good behaviour and encourage an older child to do what everyone else is doing, standing, sitting kneeling, singing etc. Mass is great because there are things to do.
- 2) Allow children to see the statues and paintings- these are the tools for explaining the Mass after all.
- 3) Sit near the front so they can see what is happening.
- 4) Have quiet things for younger ones-books that should be Christ focused not secular, and possibly colouring.
- 5) Go to Mass every week. Children like and need routine and they get used to going and taking part.
- 6) Teach children some of the basic prayers. Being able to join in with the Hail Mary and Our Father helps.

*Even if children already have some feeling for God and the things of God, they may also experience in proportion to their age and personal development the human values that are present in the Eucharistic Celebration.*

*These values include the community activity,*

*exchange of greetings,*

*capacity to listen and to seek and grant pardon,*

*expression of gratitude,*

*experience of symbolic actions,*

*a meal of friendship,*

*and festive celebration.*

*Directory for Masses with Children DMC [9]*





### WITH CHILDREN PREPARING for FIRST COMMUNION

Help your child to focus on parts of the Mass and their meaning. The attention span of a child is very short. They need encouragement from you to concentrate.

You can help them to focus at different moment in Mass:

- The Gathering Rite – As Mass begins invite your child to pray for all those they know who are gathered here today
- The Penitential Rite – Remind your child to think about someone they would like to sorry to
- The Gloria – Encourage your child to sing with the angels and tell God how happy they are
- Scripture readings – Help your child to particularly listen to the words of the Gospel and what Jesus is saying today to us
- The Creed – When we are saying the Creed together point out that where we say I believe in God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church
- General Intercessions – Invite your child to remember someone they would like to prayer for
- Presentation of the Gifts – Help your child to name the gifts they are bringing to Jesus this week
- Preface of the Mass – Invite your child to remember all the things they want to thank God for this week
- Eucharistic Prayer – Invite your child to thank Jesus for giving his life for us and to us
- The Great Amen – Help your child to see that we are saying Amen to three things: to the real presence of Christ to us, to the presence of Christ in us and to the presence of Christ in others
- Communion time – Invite your child to pray quietly and to help them see this is a special moment for meeting Jesus
- Blessing and Mission – Invite your child to think about how they will bring God's love to others during the week

Make sure you have purchased a Children's Missal so that your child can begin to follow the prayer patterns of Mass. CTS publishes a very user friendly version called **MY LITTLE MISSAL**.

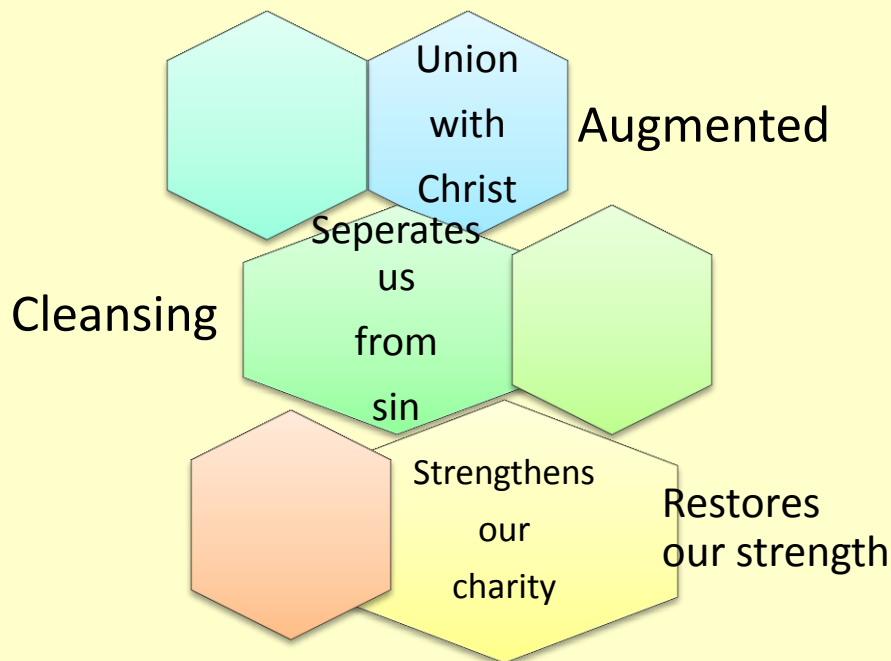
**REFLECT:** Take time to share with the person beside what you find helpful about these suggestions.... Are there other suggestions which you have found helpful? Share these with each other.



Take this and eat it,

all of you: COMMUNION

In the Eucharist we are invited to receive the body and blood of the Lord. When we receive communion there are great effects for our lives, here are some of them:



## TRANSFORMS US into the BODY of CHRIST

St. Augustine helped his congregation to see the effects of the reception of communion in these words:

*'If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are respond 'Amen' (yes, it is true!) and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, 'the Body of Christ' and respond 'Amen'.*

*Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your AMEN may be true.'*

*St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 272*

Take time to reflect on how in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ we are called to become signs of his presence in the world.....



## Teach your child

- 1) That Jesus is really present to us in every Mass and wants to meet us to share his love
- 2) We gather every Sunday so that this meeting can take place
- 3) This is why gathering for Sunday Mass is the most important meeting of the week
  
- 4) To join in the responses at Mass
- 5) To listen to the readings at Mass, responding with Thanks be to God and Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ at the Gospel
  
- 6) To look at the host and the chalice when the priest is holding it up, then to bow their head in reverence when the priest bows
  
- 7) To say a short prayer before receiving Holy Communion
- 8) That we really meet Jesus in Holy Communion
  
  
- 9) When we receive communion Jesus gives us his love and forgiveness
- 10) Jesus give us the strength to love and serve others in Holy Communion
  
  
- 11) When we meet Jesus in Holy Communion we speak to him and thank him with all our hearts
- 12) To pray after receiving Holy Communion
  
  
- 13) After we have made our First Communion, we can grow in our friendship with Jesus by receiving Holy Communion at Mass often, even during the week



## Words of Encouragement from Pope Benedict

Dear parents! I ask you to help your children to grow in faith,  
I ask you to accompany them on their journey towards First Communion,  
a journey which continues beyond that day,  
and to keep accompanying them as they make their way to Jesus and with Jesus.  
Please, go with your children to Church and take part in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration!

You will see that this is not time lost;  
rather, it is the very thing that can keep your family truly united and centred.  
Sunday becomes more beautiful,  
the whole week becomes more beautiful,  
when you go to Sunday Mass together.

And please, pray together at home too:  
at meals and before going to bed.

Prayer does not only bring us nearer to God but also nearer to one another.  
It is a powerful source of peace and joy.

Family life becomes more joyful and expansive  
whenever God is there and his closeness is experienced in prayer.

- 1) How would you like to make Sunday special for your children?
  
- 2) When do you make opportunities for family prayer?

# Receiving Holy Communion



Children and adults are free to receive communion either by the hand or on the tongue. It is important when preparing children to teach them how to receive in the hand with reverence. You can practice this at home. It can also be an opportunity to affirm the holiness of this moment and the reverence that we should have.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his book “God is Near Us,” gives us some instructions on how to receive Holy Communion by the hand in a proper, reverential way.

He quotes St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century A.D.) who tells candidates for baptism what they should do at communion. He says:

“They should make a throne of their hands,  
laying the right upon the left to form a throne for the King,  
forming at the same a cross.

This symbolic gesture, so fine and so profound, is what concerns him:  
the hands of the person form a cross, which becomes a throne,  
down into which the King inclines himself.

The open, outstretched hand can thus become a sign  
of the way that a person offers their self to the Lord,  
opens his hands for him, that they may become an instrument of his presence  
and a throne of his mercies in this world.”

## Receiving from the Chalice

Since Jesus said take and eat this is my body, take and drink this is my blood. Children should be introduced to receiving the blood of Christ when they make first Holy Communion.

This too should be practised to help the child receive prayerfully and reverently.



# We are Christ's Body



In this year of preparation it is important to emphasize with children that we receive Christ's body to become Christ's body.

We are called to bring the presence of Christ into every aspect of our lives, then we really become a sign of communion.

This is what the great St Teresa of Avila wrote about in her famous poem:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,  
no hands but yours,  
no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes  
through which is to shine  
Christ's compassion in the world.

Yours are the feet  
through which to go about  
doing good.

Yours are the hands with which  
he is to bless  
all people now.

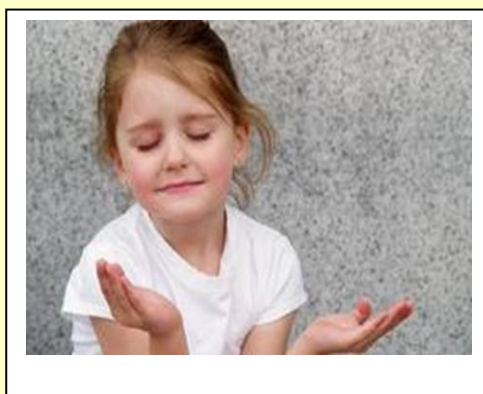
What stays with you from this prayer?

How can you help your child to become aware of his or her mission to be the body of Christ in our world today?

## SOME PRAYERS to LEARN

During this time of preparation encourage your child to learn not only the prayers of the Mass but also some prayers which can be said in the heart before receiving communion and after communion

Lord Jesus, come to me.  
Lord, Jesus, give me your love.  
Lord Jesus, come to me and give me yourself.  
Lord Jesus, friend of children, come to me.  
Lord Jesus, you are my Lord and my God.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Seomra Ranga)



Lord Jesus, I love and adore you.  
You're a special friend to me.  
Welcome, Lord Jesus, O welcome.  
Thank you for coming to me.  
Thank you, Lord Jesus, O thank you  
For giving yourself to me.  
Make me strong to show your love  
Wherever I may be.  
Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all of us children in your loving care  
And bring us to heaven to live with you there.  
I'm ready now, Lord Jesus,  
To show how much I care.  
I'm ready now to give your love  
At home and everywhere. Amen. (Seomra Ranga)

### Parents Prayer after Holy Communion

Lord Jesus I give you my hands to do your work.  
I give you my feet to go your way.  
I give you my eyes to see as you see.  
I give you my tongue to speak your words.  
I give you my mind that you may think in me.  
I give you my heart that you may love in me – love the Father and all humankind.  
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me,  
so that you, Lord, may be the one who lives and works and prays in me.

## FURTHER RESOURCES:

Catholic Truth Society:

- My Little Missal
- Praying at Mass

Redemptorists Publications

- Let's Go to Mass

McCrimmons publishers

- A Beginner's Guide to Praying the Mass – Fr Allen Morris
- The Mass a Guided Tour – Fr Thomas Richstatter

Pauline Books

- Welcome to the Mass

### WEBSITES

Understanding the Mass available on

[http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library\\_article/44/Understanding\\_the\\_Mass.html](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/44/Understanding_the_Mass.html)

Power points on the Mass available on the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh Website at Pastoral Resources



