

What is the Church?

Parent Leaflet: Introduction

Sacramental Preparation



You are being invited to present your child to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation by which we become full members of the Church.



Baptism

Your child received
the gift of new life
from God



Confirmation

Your child will receive
the fullness of
God's Spirit



Communion

Your child will
receive Christ's
Body and Blood

Over the coming months, your child will prepare to receive Jesus in Holy Communion for the first time.

On the way, your child will have a first experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is not a sacrament of initiation but it is a fitting preparation for celebrating First Holy Communion.

Reconciliation restores our life with God and with God's family, the Church, when we have damaged that by sin. It restores us to the innocence of the day we were baptised.

When your child is older, they will receive the Holy Spirit in Confirmation

Preparing Together

When you had your child baptised, the priest said:

You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and neighbour.

These words remind us that, as a parent you are the first teacher of your child in the ways of faith, just as you are the first teacher of your child in many of the ordinary ways of human living.

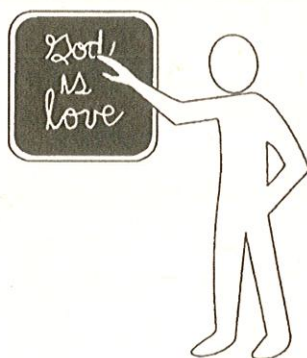
It is your responsibility and privilege to bring your child to the sacraments. However, just as you do not try to teach your child everything yourself, so in terms of his (her) faith, there are others to help you.

As a Church, we are people who travel the Christian journey together supporting and encouraging one another; we believe that everyone has something to offer. A partnership between home, school and parish will provide the best environment for your child to grow in his (her) understanding of Christian initiation and living.



Home

Parents are the first teachers of their child



School

Your child is being taught about the Faith



Parish

We all grow together in our Faith

We will prepare together for your child to receive these sacraments by exploring some of the different ways in which we can answer the question:

What is the Church?

Some answers to that question

We are the People of God

Your child will be offered the opportunity to look at what it means to be welcomed as a member of the Church, particularly reflecting on his (her) Baptism and the Introductory Rites to the Mass.

We are people who pray

Your child will explore the variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit enables us to pray during Mass as members of the Church.

We are people who celebrate forgiveness

Your child will look at what it is to forgive and be forgiven, linking this with the Penitential Rite of the Mass but also providing the preparation for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We are people who celebrate God's Word

Your child will reflect on the fact that in the Liturgy of the Word we hear our own story as God's people, a living word for ourselves today.

We are people who follow Jesus

Your child will explore how we are called to follow Jesus' way of love by giving of ourselves as he gave of himself and this will be linked to the Presentation of Gifts, which are symbols of human life and work.

We are the Body of Christ

Your child, looking forward to the celebration of Communion, will focus on the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us into the Body of Christ.

We are people who live our faith

Your child will reflect on the part we can play in the life of the Church and recognise that the Concluding Rites of the Mass are really an invitation, a being sent out to use our gifts and talents in the service of our world.

- ◆ The Church is the People of God; we are called through our personal relationship with Christ into a community, which is to be a sign of God's presence in the world today.
- ◆ We express our identity most clearly when we gather on Sunday to give praise and thanksgiving to God through our celebration of the Eucharist.
- ◆ So, the best way to help your child prepare for these sacraments is by taking part regularly in that Sunday worship.

The process of preparation

You will be given details of how the preparation is organised in your parish. It should include a combination of the following things:

Meetings for your child

These take place with a catechist or faith friend - someone from the parish who will help your child to reflect on the various themes, using a number of worksheets which may need to be completed at home.

Meetings for parents

These are intended to inform you of the work your child will do with their parish faith friend or catechist and to enable you to grow in your own understanding of the Church and especially of the Eucharist.

Celebrations

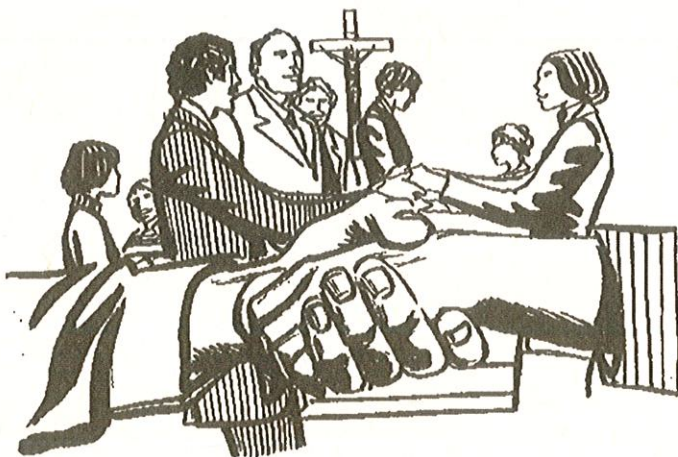
These may take place during Mass, or on a separate occasion, and are meant to help you and your child to deepen your understanding of particular parts of the Mass and your understanding of what it means to belong to the Church.

School input

This will involve teaching about the sacraments and will reinforce what is being done in the parish and at home.

Home life

You have a vital role to play in all of this, since your home life lays the foundation for everything else.



Celebration of the Sacraments

- ◆ Reconciliation will be celebrated before Christmas or early in the New Year.
- ◆ First Communion will be celebrated around the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Growing in our understanding of the sacraments of initiation is a lifelong process. Ongoing religious education will be an important means of enabling such growth. The example of committed members of the Christian community is of vital importance both now and in the years ahead.

What is the Church?

Parent Leader's Guide: Introduction

Accompanying Parents



Principles underlying the preparation of children in the Diocese of Salford to celebrate the fullness of initiation through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist:

1. The sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist complete the process, which began with Baptism; they are sacraments of initiation by which we become full members of the Church.
2. The Church is the People of God; we are called through our personal relationship with Christ into a community, which is to be a sign of God's presence in the world today. We express our identity most clearly when we gather on Sunday to give praise and thanksgiving to God through our celebration of the Eucharist.
3. Parents are the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith; it is their responsibility and privilege to bring their child to the sacraments.
4. We are people who journey together supporting and encouraging one another; we believe that everyone has something to offer. Therefore, a partnership between home, school and parish will provide the best environment for our children to grow in their understanding of Christian initiation.
5. Growing in our understanding of the sacraments of initiation is a lifelong process. Ongoing religious education will be an important means of enabling such growth; the example of committed members of the Christian community is of vital importance.

What resources are available?

- ◆ A variety of approaches which are flexible and adaptable
- ◆ Designed to enable parish teams to work with parents during the preparation of their children for the sacraments of initiation

It is recognised that each parish in our diocese is unique, and further, each new group of parents is unique. It is for each parish team to decide what to offer and how it should be presented. However, all meetings will share a common purpose and a basic structure. Parish teams are therefore invited to choose from a number of suggestions for introducing, developing and concluding their meetings.

What are we about?

- ◆ Providing support and encouragement for parents and their children

We firmly hold to the principle that parents are the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith; it is their privilege and responsibility to bring their child to the sacraments. However, we acknowledge the increasing difficulty of this task today, and believe that it is all the more important that parents are accompanied by other members of the Christian community. Working in partnership with parents, the parish and the Catholic school can ensure that children have a strong foundation for their continuing journey into the Christian life.

What is the Church?

Exploring some of the different ways in which we can answer this question will be our main focus throughout the period of preparation, so:

- ◆ We are the People of God
- ◆ We are people who pray
- ◆ We are people who celebrate forgiveness
- ◆ We are people who celebrate God's Word
- ◆ We are people who follow Jesus
- ◆ We are the Body of Christ
- ◆ We are people who live our faith

The documents from the Second Vatican Council give us a clear vision of the church as the People of God. We are called through our relationship with Jesus into a community which gathers together to offer praise and thanksgiving and which is to be a sign of God's presence in the world today.

This process of preparation offers a valuable opportunity to reach out to parents and children with renewed enthusiasm and commitment. It can result in the strengthening of relationships and a new experience of God's presence at work in our communities.

Aims for the meetings with parents

- ◆ to inform parents of the work their child will do with their parish faith friend or catechist;
- ◆ to explore one aspect of being the Church (the People of God) and focus on one part of the Mass;
- ◆ to enable parents to participate in any celebration which accompanies the particular unit as fully as possible, given individual circumstances;
- ◆ to enable parents to grow in their understanding of the church and especially of the Eucharist.

As adults learn in a variety of ways, it is a good idea to try to provide variety across the meetings. Many ideas, which would not work at the beginning of the process may well be successful once relationships have developed. It is useful therefore to see each meeting with parents as part of a wider experience and to try to be flexible throughout. Each parent can make a unique contribution to the process, if encouraged to share their own experience in a welcoming atmosphere.

Presentation of the resources

The suggested process of preparation begins with an introduction outlining the principles, giving details of the timetable and inviting a generous commitment to the journey ahead. Then each of the seven units which follow offer:

- ◆ An overview of the main themes and the link to the Mass
- ◆ A selection of approaches for use by the parent leader
- ◆ A leaflet for parents to keep suggesting ways of providing further support for their child.

We hope then that parish teams will be able to meet the needs of their own situation by selecting from a range of activities, thereby designing their own process and encouraging flexibility and creativity.

An overview of the process



Unit 1: We are the People of God

Linked to the Introductory Rites of the Mass, this unit offers the opportunity to look at what it means to be welcomed as a member of the Church, particularly reflecting on Baptism.



Unit 2: We are people who pray

This unit is not linked to a particular part of the Mass but explores the variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit enables us to pray during Mass as members of the Church.



Unit 3: We are people who celebrate forgiveness

Looking at what it is to forgive and be forgiven, this unit links with the Penitential Rite of the Mass but also provides the preparation for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas.



Unit 4: We are people who celebrate God's Word

The Liturgy of the Word is the focus for this unit, emphasising the fact that what we hear in the Scriptures is not ancient history but our own story as God's people, a living word for ourselves today.



Unit 5: We are people who follow Jesus

Linking to the Presentation of Gifts, which are symbols of human life and work, this unit explores how we are called to follow Jesus' way of love by giving of ourselves as he gave of himself.



Unit 6: We are the Body of Christ

Looking forward to the celebration of Confirmation and Communion, this unit focuses on the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us into the Body of Christ.

Celebration of the Sacraments

Confirmation will be celebrated sometime between the Fourth Sunday of Easter and Pentecost Sunday and First Communion will be celebrated around the Feast of Corpus Christi.



Unit 7: We are people who live our faith

Reflecting on the part we can play in the life of the Church, the Concluding Rites of the Mass are seen as an invitation, a being sent out to use our gifts and talents in the service of our world.