
What is the Church?

Parent Leader's Guide: Unit 1

We are the People of God



Main themes

- ◆ Baptism begins our journey into the community we call the Catholic Church.
- ◆ We are reminded of this when we gather for Mass 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.
- ◆ We look at what it means to be welcomed as members of the Church.

Link to the Mass - Introductory Rites

"Everything that happens before the first scripture reading is meant to help us assemble. That means gathering together many individuals as one community of prayer, but it also means recollecting ourselves personally - not by leaving behind the cares and distractions of home and work, but by bringing them into the gospel's light."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 7)

During the meeting, parents will:

- ◆ discover what the parish catechists or faith friends will do with the children
- ◆ be given details of the celebration of presentation, including their own role
- ◆ be offered suggestions for supporting their child at home
- ◆ consider the idea that the Church is the People of God and that we become members through a journey of initiation which begins with Baptism
- ◆ explore what it means to assemble together as God's People on Sunday 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'
- ◆ reflect on the welcome they receive and offer to other people
- ◆ be invited to pray together

Unit 1 – Approach A

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -

large bowl / jug of water

paschal candle

baptismal candle

You will also need:

copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending

one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation

1. Welcome the parents and introduce yourself and any other team members present. Ask the parents to look at the parents' leaflet and work through the main points their children will be covering with their catechist. You may want to include some or all of the following points:

- ♦ Baptism is the first of three sacraments which we call 'sacraments of initiation'
- ♦ in our diocese we celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the order in which they were first celebrated in the early life of the Church
- ♦ there are a number of signs and symbols used in Baptism: the most important symbol is water; but we also use Chrism, which will be used again in Confirmation; and we use light - the paschal candle and the baptismal candles.

2. At this point invite the parents to remember their child's Baptism - how were they prepared, who were the godparents, what do they remember of the celebration, do they know where the baptismal candle is? Allow a little time for parents to chat through this with the people nearest to them or the person with whom they have attended the meeting.

After a few moments, and a chance for anyone who might want to share anything to do so, continue by explaining that through Baptism we are welcomed into the family of God - "The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy" (*The Rite of Baptism*)

Take a few moments now to explore what we mean by 'welcome' and to consider how we can help people to feel welcome - in our homes, in meetings like this, on Sundays as we gather for Mass.

Then continue to reflect on the link between Baptism and our membership of the Church community, as follows:

- ♦ two promises are made at Baptism - parents promise to bring up their child in the faith; the parish community promises to help the parents in this task
- ♦ we are baptised "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*The Rite of Baptism*). (Possibly link this with Matthew 28:19)

- ◆ our children are beginning a new stage in their faith journey which they began at Baptism. They are supported by their families, the parish and the school
 - ◆ the most important way we show that we are part of the one family of God is when we gather on Sunday (the Lord's day) to celebrate Eucharist, to give praise and thanksgiving to God
 - ◆ at Mass and in prayer we identify ourselves as Christians when we make the sign of the cross
 - ◆ the entrance rite of the Mass helps to gather us together and prepares us to hear God's Word in the readings and to celebrate the Eucharist.
3. Draw attention to the quotation from Cardinal Bernardin's letter about the Mass which is on the parents' leaflet (or displayed on paper or overhead).

Invite the parents to think about how easy or how difficult it is for them to bring their children to Mass on Sunday, the many things which need to be done to get everyone ready, etc. Invite them to think about the idea of bringing 'all the cares and distractions of home and work' into the Sunday gathering, rather than struggling to forget them or leave them behind.

4. Details of the celebration of Presentation should now be given.
5. Invite the parents to be still for a moment and to know God's love for each of them and for their child. Pray the following prayers and invite all to respond: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

We pray for our children as they begin this new stage in their journey of faith - that they may be welcomed, guided and strengthened as they prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist. Lord, hear us...

We pray for the catechists [or faith friends] working with our children on behalf of the parish community - that they may share their love of God generously and help the children feel more fully a part of God's people. Lord, hear us...

We pray for ourselves - that we may be living examples of God's love in all we say and do. Lord, hear us...

Invite the parents to join in making the sign of the cross to finish the prayer.

6. Thank the parents for attending the meeting and encourage them to reflect further on what they have heard.

Unit 1 – Approach B

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
large bowl / jug of water
paschal candle
baptismal candle

You will also need: the room arranged ready for group work (5/6 chairs together, around a table if possible)
1 copy per group of 'People of God' sheet
copies of the parents' leaflet for those attending

1. As parents arrive for the meeting, warmly welcome them and invite them to sit grouped according to the room arrangement. Introduce yourself and any other team members who are present. Draw attention to the sheet provided - 'People of God' - and perhaps read through the questions first. Suggest the parents introduce themselves to one another, and then take about fifteen minutes to work together to offer some answers.

After about fifteen minutes ask everyone to stop and go through the sheet taking suggestions from the different groups. Once all questions have been considered, summarise the points which have emerged.

2. Explain that the children are now beginning a new stage of their journey of faith which began in baptism and that being with the parish community will be an important way in which they can grow more fully as the People of God. Coming to celebrate Mass each Sunday is especially important.
3. Give out copies of the parents' leaflet and begin to reflect with the parents on the work their children will be doing with the catechist. You may want to cover some of the following:
 - ♦ Baptism is the first of three sacraments which we call 'sacraments of initiation'
 - ♦ in our diocese we celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the order in which they were first celebrated in the early life of the Church
 - ♦ there are a number of signs and symbols used in Baptism: the most important symbol is water; but we also use Chrism, which will be used again in Confirmation; and we use light - the paschal candle and the baptismal candles.

At this point invite the parents to remember their child's Baptism - how were they prepared, who were the godparents, what do they remember of the celebration, do they know where the baptismal candle is? Remind them:

- ♦ we are baptised "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*The Rite of Baptism*). (Possibly link this with Matthew 28:19)

- ♦ our children are beginning a new stage in their faith journey which they began at Baptism. They are supported by their families, the parish and the school.

Allow a little time for parents to chat this through with the people nearest to them or the person with whom they have attended the meeting. After a few moments, and a chance for anyone who might want to share anything to do so, continue:

- ♦ through Baptism we are welcomed into the family of God - "The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy" (*The Rite of Baptism*)
- ♦ two promises are made at Baptism - parents promise to bring up their child in the faith; the parish community promises to help the parents in this task
- ♦ the most important way we show that we are part of the one family of God is when we gather on Sunday (the Lord's day) to celebrate Eucharist, to give praise and thanksgiving to God
- ♦ at Mass and in prayer we identify ourselves as Christians when we make the sign of the cross
- ♦ the entrance rite of the Mass helps to gather us together and prepares us to hear God's Word in the readings and to celebrate the Eucharist.

4. Details of the celebration of Presentation should now be given.
5. Invite the parents to make the sign of the cross together, the sign of our faith as People of God. Ask them to picture their child and to pray that God will bless her/him over the next months as he/she prepares to share more fully in the life of the Church.

After a few moments of silence pray the following prayer:

Loving God, we thank you that you have blessed us with our children. Help us to show them how much you love them as we support them in the months ahead. Bless their teachers and the parishioners who give their time to share their faith with them. Help us all to grow together as your people. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Risen Lord. Amen.

6. Thank the parents for attending the meeting and encourage them to reflect further on what they have heard and discussed.

PEOPLE OF GOD

1. What do we mean by 'the Church'? Is it just a building?
2. What goes on at our church and other local parishes?
(You may want to use the list of suggestions to help)
3. Do you find it difficult getting to Mass with the family on Sunday? If so, why?
4. Do you think it is important to arrive at Mass in a calm state without any worries? Please explain your reason.
5. Do you manage to talk with parishioners and friends after Mass? Do you think this is important? Why?

CAFOD

Visits to the sick and elderly

Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)

Social Committee

Altar servers

Choir / folk group

Readers

Eucharistic ministers

Volunteers to do the collection

Volunteers to organise refreshments after Mass

Parish trips out

Activities for young people

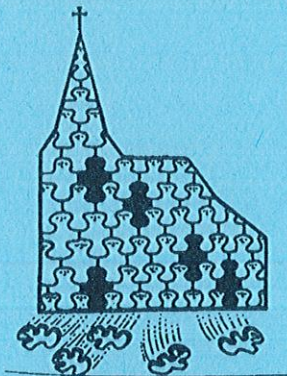
Meeting friends

What else?

Unit 1 – Approach C

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
large bowl / jug of water
paschal candle
baptismal candle

You will also need: copies of the 'Images of Church' sheet
copies of the parents' leaflet for those attending
one large copy of the Cardinal Bernardin quotation



On a display board, wall or flip chart have a large outline drawing of a church divided into spaces. Make sure there are enough for all who will attend, including team members. If the outline can resemble your church, so much the better.

1. As people arrive, warmly welcome them and invite them to go to the large drawing of the church and write their name, in one of the spaces before taking a seat. Make sure team members have already done this. (An alternative would be to write the name of their child in a space).

Once everyone has arrived and is seated, introduce the main theme for the meeting, reminding parents that we are thinking about ways in which we can answer the question "What is the Church?" Our children will be learning that the Church is the People of God, people who have been called, named, loved and brought into new life through Baptism.

Give out copies of the 'Images of Church' sheet and invite the parents to look carefully at each image before deciding which one is closest to their understanding of Church.

Invite them to talk about this with one or two others who are sitting near them before beginning a general discussion about the images. Emphasise the fact that the Church is people, God's people, called to give praise and thanksgiving and be a sign of God's presence in the world today.

2. Ask the parents to look at the parents' leaflet and work through the main points their children will be covering with their catechist.

You may want to include some or all of the following points:

- ♦ Baptism is the first of three sacraments which we call 'sacraments of initiation'

- ♦ in our diocese we celebrate Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the order in which they were first celebrated in the early church
- ♦ there are a number of signs and symbols used in Baptism: the most important symbol is water; but we also use chrism, which will also be used in confirmation; and we use light - the paschal candle and the baptismal candles
- ♦ through Baptism we are welcomed into the family of God - "The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy" (*The Rite of Baptism*)
- ♦ the most important way we show that we are part of the one family of God is when we gather on Sunday (the Lord's day) to celebrate Eucharist, to give praise and thanksgiving to God.

Take a few moments now to explore what we mean by 'welcome' and to consider how we can help people to feel welcome - in our homes, in meetings like this, on Sundays as we gather for Mass. Then continue:

- ♦ we are baptised "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*The Rite of Baptism*). (Possibly link this with Matthew 28:19)
 - ♦ at Mass and in prayer we identify ourselves as Christians when we make the sign of the cross
 - ♦ the entrance rite of the Mass helps to gather us together and prepares us to hear God's Word in the readings and to celebrate the Eucharist
3. Draw attention to the quotation from Cardinal Bernadin's letter about the Mass which is on the parents' leaflet (or displayed on paper or overhead).

Ask the parents in small groups of 4/5 to consider the following, assuring them that there are no 'right answers' here, but that they are simply being encouraged to share their own thoughts and feelings together.

- (i) How easy is it to think of ourselves as 'one community of prayer' when we come to Mass on Sunday? What can help us with this? How can we help our children with this?
- (ii) What are 'the distractions of home and work' that we might need to bring with us?

After ten minutes, invite some feedback, taking one or two points from each group. It may be helpful if these points are written up on a flip chart or large sheet of paper so all can see.

4. Details of the celebration of Presentation should now be given.

5. Invite the parents to be still for a few moments and to know that God loves each one of them.

Invite them to look at the large picture of the church on which they wrote their names when they arrived. Ask them to pray silently for a moment for all the other names, which make up the People of God in this area. Then read:

"But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel;
Do not fear for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name, you are mine."
(Isaiah 43:1)

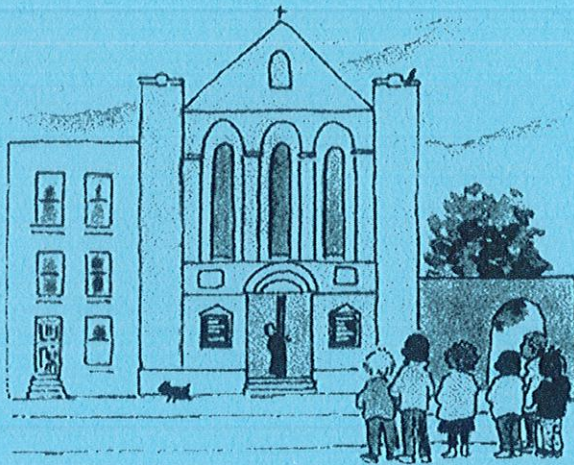
Allow a few more moments of silence, then conclude:

Loving God we thank you that you have called each one of us by name, to be your people. Guide and encourage us as we journey with our children, preparing them for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Risen Lord. Amen.

6. Thank the parents for attending the meeting and encourage them to reflect further on what they have heard and discussed.

Images of Church

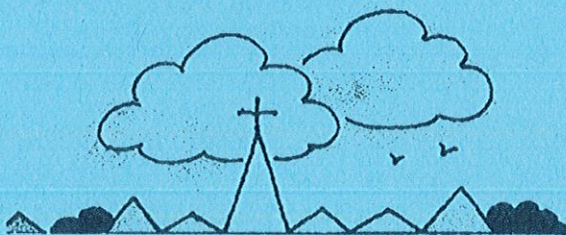
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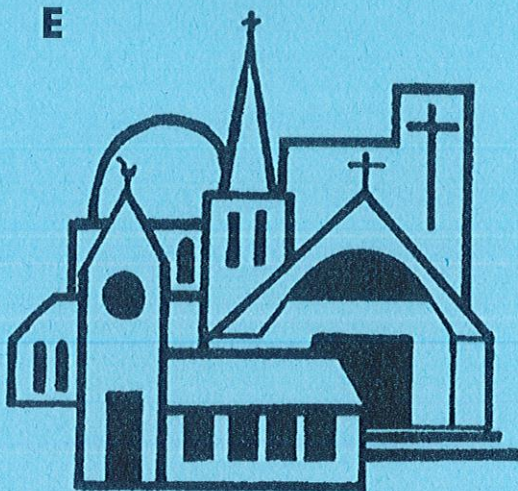
C



D



E



F



What is the Church?

Parent Leaflet: Unit 1

We are the People of God



Main Themes

The children, with their catechists, are exploring what it means to belong and to be made welcome in a family and in the Church.

They are being asked to think about:

- ♦ the importance of the day they were born
- ♦ the other members of their family
- ♦ some of the ways that the family spends time together

They are also being asked to think about the day they were baptised and how this made them a member of another family - the People of God.

This other family gathers together each Sunday to celebrate Mass. The children are now preparing to be able to take a full part in that celebration, to feel welcome and at home in Church.

The sign of the cross is an important sign for the People of God. The children are learning how that sign was used in their Baptism and how it is used when the People of God gather to pray.

From Your Child's Worksheet

I belong to another family...

The name of this family is the C_____ C_____



I became a member of that family when I was baptised.

That was also a very special day.

I was baptised on _____

At _____ Church



My Christian name is _____

My Godparents were _____

and _____



When I was baptised...

I was welcomed into the Church - the People of God

Some of the people who welcomed me were:

The Priest said:

_____, the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of the cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead, and invite your parents (and godparents) to do the same.

The sign of the cross is an important sign for members of the People of God.

We use that sign each time we begin to pray.



What You Can Do To Help Your Child

Talk with your child about the day they were baptised.

Have you any photographs? Any gifts?

Who were the Godparents? Have you been in touch lately?

If you have one, find your child's baptism candle.

Explain it was lit on that special day.

It can be lit again to mark other special days in your child's journey of faith.

At Baptism, water was poured over your child's head three times - "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Try each day to make the sign of the cross with your child.

Remember the promise you made at your child's Baptism - to bring your child up in the Faith.

Celebrate Mass together each Sunday when we gather as the People of God.

Help your child to complete their worksheet - especially the last page, where you will find this story about Jesus and the Little Children:

People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

Please keep your child's worksheet safe, so that they can bring it back to the next meeting with their catechist.

The Introductory Rites to the Mass

These help us to gather as the People of God

"Everything that happens before the first scripture reading is meant to help us assemble. That means gathering together many individuals as one community of prayer, but it also means recollecting ourselves personally - not by leaving behind the cares and distractions of home and work, but by bringing them into the gospel's light."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 7)

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 1

We are the People of God



I belong to a family...

My family name is _____

The day I was born was a very special day.

My birthday is _____

Other members of my family are:

Here I am!

When I was born...

I was welcomed into my family and into the world

My Family at Home

Some of the people who
welcomed me were:

I belong to another family...

The name of this family is the C_____ C_____



I became a member of that family when I was baptised.

That was also a very special day.

I was baptised on _____

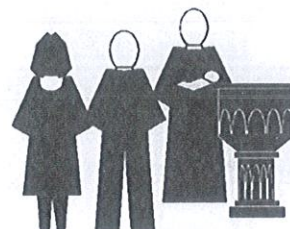
At _____ Church



My Christian name is _____

My Godparents were _____

and _____



When I was baptised...

I was welcomed into the Church - the People of God

Some of the people who welcomed me were:

The Priest said:

_____, the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of the cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead, and invite your parents (and godparents) to do the same.

The sign of the cross is an important sign for members of the People of God.

We use that sign each time we begin to pray.



At my Baptism...

I was baptised
with water and
the Holy Spirit
as God gave
me a new
kind of life
in Jesus



I was anointed
with the
oil of chrism
so that God's
power would
make me strong
to be like Him

I was given
a lighted
candle
to show that
Christ was now
present in
my life



**My parents and the Church
community are now helping me
prepare to celebrate Communion for
the first time**

**When I receive Holy Communion I will
share fully in the Mass**



At Mass...

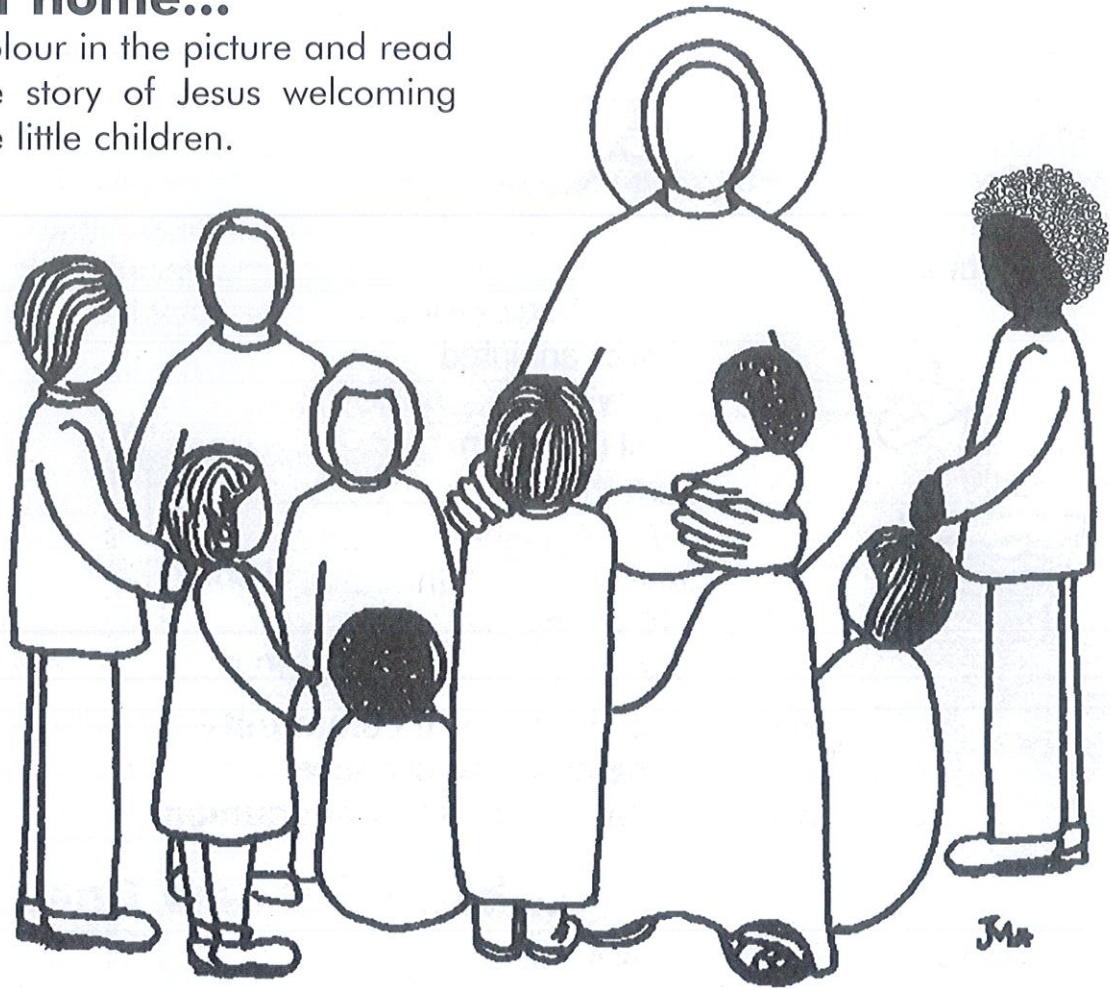
We begin our prayers with the Sign of the Cross - In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest welcomes us to the celebration.

We are welcome to be there because we are part of God's family.

At home...

Colour in the picture and read the story of Jesus welcoming the little children.



People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

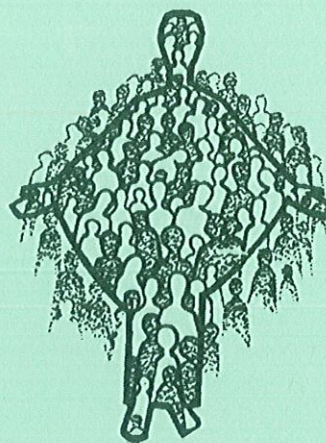
Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

Remember that Jesus first welcomed you when you were baptised. On that day you began to be a very special friend of Jesus. Through your reception of Holy Communion, you will deepen and strengthen that friendship. Jesus wants you to be part of his special family - the People of God - for the rest of your life.

What is the Church?

Catechist's Guide: Unit 1

We are the People of God



Since this is your first meeting with the children, you will need to spend a little bit of time at the beginning getting to know their names and explaining what will happen at their meetings with you.

Remember that you are not acting as a teacher but a catechist, a faith friend, someone from the parish who is prepared to share a little of their own faith with the children.

This is especially important on this first occasion, since the aim of this unit is to explore what it means to belong and to be made welcome. This will be done by reflecting with the children on a number of themes:

- ♦ The fact that they belong to a family
- ♦ Their baptism which made them members of God's family
- ♦ The way they are welcomed at Church
- ♦ The fact that Jesus welcomed little children as his friends

In preparation for this session, you might like to arrange for the children:

- ♦ to see the things that are used at a baptism - the font, the oils, the candle
- ♦ to see a video of a baptism (either in the session or at school)
- ♦ to be present for a baptism

The parish priest might be able to help with this particular aspect of the input.

The most important thing is for the children to enjoy meeting with you, so that they think coming to Church is something to look forward to. This is especially important in this first session where the emphasis is on being welcome!

INITIATION

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 1

**We are the
People of God**



I belong to a family...

My family name is _____

The day I was born was a very special day.

My birthday is _____

Other members of my family are:

Here I am!

When I was born...

I was welcomed into my family and into the world

My Family at Home

Some of the people who welcomed me were:

I belong to another family...

The name of this family is the C_____ C_____



I became a member of that family when I was baptised.

That was also a very special day.

I was baptised on _____

At _____ Church

My Christian name is _____

My Godparents were _____

and _____



When I was baptised...

I was welcomed into the Church - the People of God

Some of the people who welcomed me were:

The Priest said:

_____, the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of the cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead, and invite your parents (and godparents) to do the same.

The sign of the cross is an important sign for members of the People of God.

We use that sign each time we begin to pray.



Page 1

Explore with the children the fact that we get our surname from our families.

Mention some family names as an example.

Point out that sometimes family names describe what the family used to do a long time ago (eg. "smith", "baker", etc), or the place the family came from or something else that distinguishes one family from another.

Point out that the birth of a baby is a happy occasion. People celebrate and congratulate the parents.

People come together to welcome the new baby.

Parents know that they will have a lot to do to help their child grow strong and healthy.

Note: the boxes 'Here I am!' and 'My Family at Home' can be used to draw pictures or for photographs.

Page 2

[C_____ C_____ can be either 'Christian Community' or 'Catholic Church']

Explain that Christians belong to the family of God as well as their own family at home. They become part of this family at baptism. At baptism we are signed with the "sign of the cross". This is our special Christian sign.

Christians choose a "Christian" name for the first name of their children. This is usually the name of a saint whose protection parents want for their child and whose life they find especially attractive.

Members of God's family gather to welcome new members. It is a happy occasion.

Parents know they have a lot to do to bring their child up as a child of God. They ask other family members or friends to help them bring their child up as a child of God. These people are called "godparents".

At my Baptism...

I was baptised with water and the Holy Spirit as God gave me a new kind of life in Jesus



I was anointed with the oil of chrism so that God's power would make me strong to be like Him

I was given a lighted candle to show that Christ was now present in my life



My parents and the Church community are now helping me prepare to celebrate Confirmation and Communion



When I am confirmed I will receive the fullness of God's Spirit...

When I receive Holy Communion I will share fully in the Mass



At Mass...

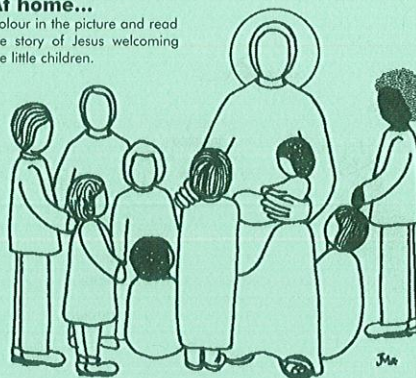
We begin our prayers with the Sign of the Cross - In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest welcomes us to the celebration.

We are welcome to be there because we are part of God's family.

At home...

Colour in the picture and read the story of Jesus welcoming the little children.



People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

Remember that Jesus first welcomed you when you were baptised. On that day you began to be a very special friend of Jesus. Through your Confirmation and Holy Communion, you will deepen and strengthen that friendship. Jesus wants you to be part of his special family - the People of God - for the rest of your life.

Page 3

In baptism we are washed clean of sin and given new life.

We are strengthened by God's anointing with oil.

We shine for Jesus and receive a light from the Easter Candle (the light of Christ).

The Holy Spirit comes down upon the baptised to help them be a child of God.

When we are confirmed the Holy Spirit will return to make us stronger.

Soon we will receive Jesus in Holy Communion and this will feed the life of God within us.

We will receive Jesus during Mass.

We begin Mass with our Christian sign: "the sign of the cross".

Page 4

Ask the children to complete this page of the worksheet at home but, if time allows, take them through the ideas that it contains:

Jesus was always pleased to see little children.

He made them very welcome.

We learn about this in the Bible.

Remember that Jesus has already welcomed you at Baptism.

He sees you as his friend and he looks forward to your becoming better friends through Confirmation and Holy Communion.

Remind the children to bring their worksheet back to the next session. Thank them for taking part, or tell them how much you have enjoyed working with them.

Additional Suggestions and Resources

1. The Rite of Baptism

This might be a useful resource for you to look at before the session, since many of the words that are spoken by the priest help to explain the symbolism used in the service.

2. Making People Welcome

You can help the children to explore particular ways in which we make people feel welcome or unwelcome, perhaps like this:

"Suppose somebody came into the room and we did not want them to stay; how would we show, without speaking, that they were not welcome and that we wanted them to go away?"

Then suggest the opposite and explore the different facial expressions and gestures which tell people they are welcome.

You might then think about the ways in which we make people welcome (or not) at Church.

3. The Story of Jesus and the Little Children

People often brought children to Jesus and he always welcomed them and gave them his blessing.

One day, he saw his disciples sending the children away. Jesus was not pleased with them. He said: 'Don't send the children away like that. Let them come to me.'

Then he put his arms round the children and blessed them.

4. Be Prepared

It is very likely that the children will not know all the details of their own baptism (date, church, godparents), so be prepared to let them complete that part of the worksheet with their parents. Alternatively, it might be possible for you to have this information available (through the parish priest or co-ordinator) for the children in your group before you begin.

What is the Church?

Celebration Guide: Unit 1

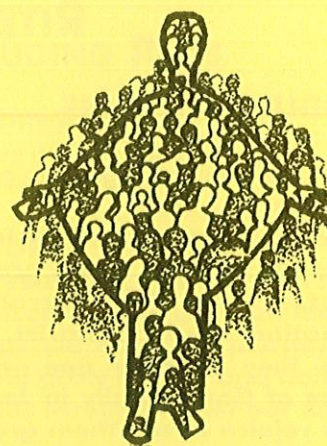
We are the People of God

The Rite of Presentation consists of two elements: at the beginning, there is the blessing and sprinkling of water. Then, after the Gospel and Homily, the Rite of Presentation, in which the children's baptismal candles are lighted and presented to them.

The parents, children and whole parish are questioned about the forthcoming months, and the children themselves hand over their name cards. If celebrated during a Sunday Mass, the whole celebration will tell our children that they are welcome in our parish, and encourage all parishioners to think about our membership of the community of the Church.

1. In Baptism our children have already received the greatest of all gifts from God: a sharing in the life of his Son. There now await them further gifts in the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, by which they will become full members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. The journey of Initiation, therefore, enters a new stage, as the children and their families, and indeed the whole parish, come before God to ask his blessing and strength in this journey.

2. This new stage begins in the Rite of Presentation, where *the children themselves* affirm that they are ready and willing to continue their journey of initiation. Their parents too, who have borne "the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the faith", commit themselves to a new stage in that responsibility. Also the members of the parish pledge their support and prayer for the forthcoming months of preparation.



3. This celebration will normally take place on a Sunday towards the middle or end of September, either during a Parish Mass or as a separate celebration outside Mass. During Mass the Liturgy of the Word uses the readings of the Sunday. Outside Mass the Sunday readings may be used, or those suggested on the back page.

4. In places where children celebrate the Liturgy of the Word in a separate place, it is recommended that on this Sunday they remain with the wider community for the Liturgy of the Word.

5. It is recommended that all the details of this Rite be thoroughly prepared with parents and children beforehand. Readers, commentators and other ministers should be selected on the basis of liturgical competence. Some younger children are able to read the Scriptures well, but the witness of adults ministering with care and reverence is often more effective in giving good example, and enabling the Word of God to be heard.

6. In the Rite of Presentation during Mass the norms regarding musical priorities remain the same. The Gospel Acclamation, "Holy, holy", Mystery of Faith and Great Amen should be sung. Other music should be chosen for its appropriateness to the occasion. Where possible the Responsorial Psalm should be sung, but never replaced by a non-Scriptural hymn.

7. Check-list for the Rite of Presentation:

- ☐ Commentator
- ☐ Readers
- ☐ Paschal Candle (for procession)
- ☐ Water for sprinkling (font or large vessel on the sanctuary)
- ☐ Baptismal/Processional candle for each child
- ☐ Name card for each child

RITE OF PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Before the celebration begins, a commentator may introduce it:

We have come together today to welcome our children who are being presented as candidates for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Through Baptism they became one with us as members of God's family in Jesus Christ. Now we rejoice to see them growing and preparing for the fullness of that membership. In this celebration we pray for them and for their families.

Let us now stand to sing together

The Opening Hymn is sung. The priest and ministers enter in the usual way. The Paschal Candle may be carried in the procession and placed in its holder near the font or the vessel of water to be used in the Rite of Sprinkling. When the hymn is over, the priest says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All reply: Amen.

The priest greets the congregation in these or similar words:

My dear children, parents, and all members of God's Family here at (name of Church). I welcome you with great joy. May the Lord God, who calls us together as his children, be ever with you.

All reply: And also with you.

Priest:

We ask God to welcome with love our children who come here today, seeking Confirmation and First Communion. We look forward to the day when they share fully at the Lord's table. Meanwhile, we celebrate the living water with which we were all baptised.

BLESSING AND SPRINKLING OF HOLY WATER

The Priest stands by the font/vessel of water:

Dear friends, this water will be used to remind us of our baptism. Let us ask God to bless it and to keep us faithful to the Spirit he has given us.

God our Father,

Your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth; it washes away our sins and brings us eternal life. We ask you now to + bless this water and to give us your protection on this day you have made your own. Renew the living spring of life within us and protect us in spirit and body, that we may be free from sin and come into your presence to receive your gift of salvation.

The people are sprinkled with the blessed water in the usual way and/or invited to come and take water themselves from the font or vessel. Alternatively the children being presented for Initiation can be invited to come forward and take water, after which the rest of the assembly is sprinkled. This is accompanied by an appropriate song.

Priest:

May almighty God cleanse us from our sins and through the Eucharist we celebrate make us worthy to sit at his table in his heavenly kingdom.

All: Amen.

On Sunday the "Glory to God in the highest" follows immediately.

The Opening Prayer is of the occurring Sunday.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Readings are taken from the occurring Sunday.

RITE OF PRESENTATION

After the Homily, the priest moves to stand by the Paschal Candle and addresses the children and their families:

My dear children and parents, this candle reminds us that Jesus is risen, and that because of our Baptism we share in his new life. I invite the parents to come to the Easter Candle and light your own candles from its living flame, receiving and sharing the light of love and discipleship.

Children and parents come forward with either their baptismal candle or a processional candle. The parents light the candle from the Paschal Candle and go to their appointed place - if possible they should stay on the sanctuary, visible to the congregation.

Once all the candles are lighted, the priest says:
My dear parents, I now invite you to present these candles to your children, as a sign of passing on your faith to them.

The parents hand the candles to the children.

The priest then questions the parents and children.

Priest: (to the parents)

Are you willing, to the best of your ability, to help your children prepare for the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist?

Parents: We are.

Priest: (to the children)

Do you want to prepare to receive Confirmation and Holy Communion?

Children: Yes, I do.

The children hand the name cards to the priest.

Priest:

We welcome you and your family into our programme of preparation.

It should be noted that, where numbers permit, the above dialogue is more effective individually. Where there are too many, parents and children may be addressed collectively and their name cards brought up in procession together. In the latter case an appropriate song may accompany the procession.

Priest: (to the wider community)

My dear friends, we have witnessed these families beginning a new stage in the journey which will lead to Confirmation and First Communion. Do you promise to welcome them warmly, remember them in your prayers, lead them by your example, and support them at all times ?

All: We do.

The candles are blown out and all return to their places for the Prayer of the Faithful.

*If the celebration is **during Mass**, it continues as normal with the Presentation of the Gifts.*

*If the celebration is **outside Mass**, the Prayer of the Faithful concludes with the Our Father, followed by the Concluding Rites.*

CONCLUDING RITES

CONCLUDING PRAYER

*(only for use **outside Mass**)*

Priest:

**Lord our God,
in Jesus, your Son, you bring us together;
as we welcome these children today,
grant that we may all journey as one
family, and grow in love and holiness.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

All: Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Priest:

The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

The priest stretches his arms over the people and says:

**Lord our God,
Your Son gladly welcomed little children.
He took them in his arms, blessed them,
and held them up as an example for all.
Hear our prayers,
and watch over these children
whom you have already blessed
with the grace of baptism.
Look with love
on those who care for these children
and guide them as they raise their families.
May all your people grow in grace
in the love of the Holy Spirit
through Christ our Lord.**

All: Amen.

Priest:

**May Almighty God bless you, the Father, +
and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: Amen.

Priest:

**Children, all of us here today now ask you
to go forward to prepare well for your
Confirmation and first sharing in Holy
Communion. Our love goes with you. Let us
all go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.**

All: Thanks be to God.

The Final Hymn is sung.

IDEAS FOR THE CELEBRATION

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Priest:

**Let us turn to God with all our needs,
trusting in his goodness.**

Reader:

**We pray for all the needs of the world at
this time. [Pause for prayer]
That there may be peace and justice for
all. Lord in your mercy...**

**We pray for the whole Church, our own
Diocese of Salford, and for this parish of
N. [Pause for prayer]
That we may be filled with the love and
joy of knowing God. Lord, in your mercy...**

**We pray for our children, who have been
presented here today. [Pause for prayer]
That they may grow in faith and take their
place as full members of the Church. Lord,
in your mercy...**

**We pray for all who will help our children
in the months ahead. [Pause for prayer]
That they may be filled with the Holy Spirit
in all they do. Lord, in your mercy...**

**We pray for all those we know who are
sick or suffering in any way. [Pause for
prayer]
That they may be healed and comforted.
Lord, in your mercy...**

Priest:

**Father, we ask you to accept our prayers.
Help us to grow as faithful members of
your Church. We ask this through Christ
our Lord.**

SUGGESTIONS FOR MUSIC

Hymns

Abba, Father, from your hands
Be not afraid
Christ be beside me
Do not be afraid
Father, in my life I see
Father, we adore you
Follow me, follow me
Here I am, Lord
Holy God we praise thy name
Lord of all hopefulness
Now thank we all our God
The light of Christ
Seek ye first

Rite of Sprinkling

Water of Life (Stephen Dean)
We shall draw water (Paul Inwood)
The light of Christ
Do not be afraid

Gloria

Gloria, gloria (Mike Anderson)
Gloria (George Salazar)

Psalms

Here I am (Christopher Walker)
Your Law, O God (Christopher Walker)
O the Word of my Lord (Damien Lundy)

Gospel Acclamation

'Celtic' Alleluia
Seek ye first (refrain)
Alleluia, thank you for fathers

SUGGESTIONS FOR READINGS (OUTSIDE MASS)

Note: the Sunday readings may always be used.

**1st Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-10
1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27
Galatians 3:26-29
Gospel: John 1:35-42
Matthew 3:13-17**

A SUGGESTED BULLETIN INSERT

At this time of year some of our [Year 3]
children are beginning their journey to
Confirmation and Holy Communion. We begin
with the celebration of "Presentation" on

This celebration will focus on the **welcome** the
children received at Baptism. It is also an
opportunity for all of us to think about how **we
are the Body of Christ**, the Family of the
Church.

Every time we celebrate Mass, we begin with
the sign of the cross, in which we were
baptised. This shows we "belong". Our
children's journey now is about them fully
"belonging" to the Church, and in particular to
this parish. Perhaps we should view this as an
opportunity to think about how we begin Mass:
do we feel welcome? How do we welcome
others (especially strangers) to our Church?
What will our children and their families see
and experience as they arrive for Mass?