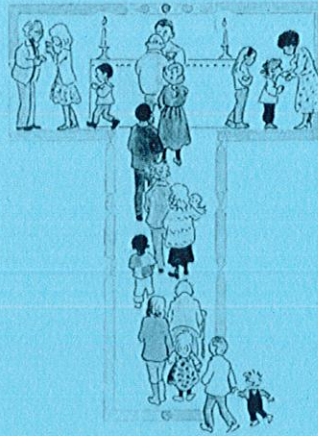


What is the Church?

Parent Leader's Guide: Unit 6

We are the Body of Christ



Main themes

- ◆ We celebrate initiation.
- ◆ Through the power of the Holy Spirit the gifts of bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus.
- ◆ The sacrament of Confirmation seals our Baptism and enables us to share fully as members of the Body of Christ.

Link to the Mass - Liturgy of the Eucharist

"... this table, ... is God's grace and gift. This is food for the journey that we began at Baptism."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 21)

During the meeting, parents will:

- ◆ appreciate the relationship between Confirmation and First Holy Communion as sacraments of initiation
- ◆ discover what the parish catechists or faith friends will do with the children
- ◆ be given details of the arrangements for the celebrations of Confirmation and First Holy Communion
- ◆ be clear about the role of sponsors and their own role as parents in the celebrations
- ◆ consider suggestions for supporting their child at home
- ◆ be invited to pray together

Important Notes:

A number of parishes are planning two meetings to cover this unit.

As the main emphasis will inevitably be on the two sacramental celebrations, the material for use with this unit has been organised in three sections, rather than the usual three alternative approaches:

Section A addresses the main themes of Initiation.

Section B provides a variety of discussion questions and activities and the main points being covered through classroom religious education.

Section C highlights some practical details relating to the celebrations.

In this way, parent leaders will have sufficient material to be able to select the most appropriate content and process to meet their own situations.

Further reflection on the importance of Eucharist for the continuing journey of faith is provided through the final unit.

Unit 6 – Section A

This section presents some of the main themes relating to initiation.

“The three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.”

(Christian Initiation, General Introduction, RCIA)

The following key points concerning Christian initiation may be presented to the parents in preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion:

- ◆ our children are now ready to complete the journey of initiation which began at Baptism.
- ◆ each of the sacraments of initiation celebrate a different emphasis of the Christian life: Baptism celebrates the gift of faith and our sharing in the Risen Christ; Confirmation celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit binding us more closely to the Church; Eucharist celebrates the unity of all God’s people, a people called to work with Christ for the salvation of the world.
- ◆ no matter when we receive these sacraments, they are for life, and not for a particular moment in life.
- ◆ this is a cause for real celebration; already members of God’s church family through Baptism and gifted with the Holy Spirit, they will now ‘be sealed’ with the Holy Spirit and be more closely bound to the Church.
- ◆ through this celebration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit they will be able, for the first time, to share fully as members of the Body of Christ, receiving the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.
- ◆ the celebration of Confirmation and the celebration of First Holy Communion are the final two steps on the journey to full membership of the Church; their close connection should be apparent in the way in which they are celebrated in our parishes.
- ◆ for the first time, having celebrated Confirmation, our children will be able to pray fully the Eucharistic prayer of praise and thanksgiving which results in the members of the Body of Christ ‘receiving what they are and becoming what they receive’.
- ◆ although the celebration of Confirmation completes the process of initiation begun in Baptism, it is only once we have received the body and blood of the Risen Lord that we are full and active members of the Body of Christ.
- ◆ this full and active membership will depend on the regular celebration of the Eucharist throughout our lives, enabling us to live out our baptismal calling and using the gifts of the Spirit in service of our world.

Unit 6 – Section B

This section offers a variety of discussion questions and activities and the main points being covered through classroom religious education.

1. Focus and display

Before parents arrive for the meeting, have clearly displayed the following:

- a large bowl of water, if possible with lighted floating candles;*
- a glass container with a generous amount of oil [alternatively, the parish oil of Chrism, or catechumens];*
- a Bible, open at Acts 2;*
- a loaf of bread and a jug (or opened bottle) of red wine.*

If it is possible, arrange these in three 'tiers' or layers on an attractive cloth. (Tables of varying sizes and/or boxes can provide the necessary effect).

As parents arrive for the meeting have some quiet reflective music playing, for example:

- Taize - Veni Sancte Spiritus
- Taize - Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup
- Bernadette Farrell - Spirit of God

Begin the meeting with a scripture reading either Acts 2: 1 - 4; or 1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26. Then lead into some of the key points from Section A.

2. Activities which focus on the symbols

Introduce this activity by reference to the coming celebrations of Confirmation and First Holy Communion, undoubtedly special occasions in the lives of our children and their families.

Ask parents to think of other special occasions in life and the ways in which we 'mark' them or celebrate them and after a few moments gather these on a flip chart or large sheet of paper.

Examples, which may be offered, would include:

- birthdays - marked with cards and gifts, flowers, parties;
- weddings - marked with cards and gifts, exchange of rings, shared meal/party

Draw out the fact that the card or gift stands for much more than the item itself. It symbolises what we want to say. It can represent our deepest concerns; equally it can sometimes be little more than a formality. Almost always, there are simple rituals, which accompany such occasions - singing "Happy Birthday" or "Auld Lang Syne" or cutting the cake or speeches.

It is the same with the Church. An outsider, an alien from another planet perhaps, looking at what we do would be unable to understand our rituals. They would be unable to understand the deeper meaning that lies behind our use of ordinary things like water, oil, bread and wine. This is because when we use these in the celebration of the sacraments they are something different; they are symbols taking us to a deeper appreciation of God's love at work in our lives.

Briefly outline the main symbols used in celebrating the sacraments of initiation - water and light, oil, bread and wine.

Take the oil from the display and refer to the way, as the oil of Chrism, it is used both in Baptism and in Confirmation. Consecrated by the Bishop on Holy Thursday, it is used to anoint the crown of the head in Baptism, following the pouring of the water, then it is used by the Bishop [or priest] to anoint and 'seal' with the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

Oils have always been an important part of our lives:

- ◆ the use of oil to show a call to special service: kings or queens, Jesus' anointing before his passion and death;
- ◆ the strengthening and protective qualities of oil - how athletes and gladiators used to rub themselves with oil to prepare for the fight ahead - the use of sun oil today
- ◆ the importance of oil in cooking and the re-discovery of the benefits of olive oil for the heart!
- ◆ the sweet smell of many oils - Chrism being one (where the oil is mixed with balsam)

In small groups of 3/4 invite the parents to discuss one or more of the following:

- (i) Why do you think there is a growing interest in the use of oil in our society today aromatherapy, cooking with flavoured oils etc?
- (ii) Share any experience you may have of using aromatherapy oils - how did you feel? What effects did they have?
- (iii) How might we talk with our children about the oil of Chrism?

Indicate the bread and wine in the display and remind the parents how in the last unit we considered these as representing all of our lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, these gifts of bread and wine will 'become for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

- ◆ Bread is a staple food, it is life-giving. The Eucharist also is life-giving. We need to be sustained by the body and blood of Jesus if we are to live his life.
- ◆ God fed the people with manna in the wilderness to give them strength. We need to be nourished by God as we travel on our journey of faith.
- ◆ Bread must be broken if it is to be shared. We see how deep God's love for us is in the broken body of Jesus on the cross.
- ◆ Bread must be shared. The Eucharist is not a private act of devotion, it is a community meal. We share in Christ's life as members of a family.
- ◆ Wine is a sign of healing (the Good Samaritan poured wine and oil on the wounds of the injured traveller). Wine is life-giving. The Eucharist is life-giving and healing.
- ◆ Wine is a sign of joy. We rejoice in the depths of God's love for us and his presence with us.
- ◆ Wine is a sign of blessing. God rejoices in us.
- ◆ Wine is for sharing. We have entered into a relationship with God which we share with others.

In small groups of 3/4 invite the parents to discuss one or more of the following:

- (i) When we celebrate the Eucharist we are coming together as the family of God, sharing a meal. How often do we in our busy lives share a meal with our own family? Why is this important?
- (ii) Share your experience of coming together with others for special meals. Why do you remember them? What effect did they have on the group gathered there?
- (iii) How can we help our children appreciate the importance of bread and wine in our lives?

3. Reflection on Confirmation

As people arrive for the meeting, have the room arranged ready for group work with copies of the reflection sheet *What Does Confirmation Mean To Me?* and pens/pencils on the tables (or give these out at an appropriate point in the meeting).

Invite the parents to take five minutes to go through the list of words, underlining the five that are most meaningful for them. Then invite them to share these in groups of 4/5 seeing which are common and which are different.

After about ten minutes invite any feedback. There may be some responses which still focus on the sacrament of Confirmation as primarily something we do, our act of commitment, rather than as a sacrament of initiation in which we celebrate God's activity in the gift of the Holy Spirit binding us more closely to the Church. Whilst valuing all that is offered, it is important that the key points in Section A are presented.

4. Reflection on Eucharist

As people arrive for the meeting, have the room arranged ready for group work with copies of the reflection sheet *What Does Eucharist Mean To Me?* and pens/pencils on the tables (or give these out at an appropriate point in the meeting).

Invite the parents to take five minutes to go through the list of words, underlining the five that are most meaningful for them. Then invite them to share these in groups of 4/5 seeing which are common and which are different. After about ten minutes invite any feedback.

5. Workshop Activity for Confirmation and Eucharist

Give each group a large sheet of paper and a pen/pencil or felt tip. Ask them to write down ways in which they feel they can help and support their children through the celebrations of Confirmation and First Holy Communion. Tell them that after 10 minutes you will invite them to display their suggestions.

Once they are all displayed, invite everyone to move around and have a look at the other groups' suggestions. Then draw together some of the main points, linking them to some of the ideas which their children will cover in their RE lessons at school:

"Teachers will offer children opportunities to:

- ◆ recall the Last Supper through Scripture
- ◆ appreciate the Mass as a special meal in which God's family remembers Jesus
- ◆ explore the symbolic meaning of bread, wine, meal and altar
- ◆ recognise the part played by the Holy Spirit in changing bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus
- ◆ learn that Jesus promised to remain with the Apostles through the coming of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ recall the occasions when the Risen Jesus met the Apostles
- ◆ recall the story of Pentecost
- ◆ appreciate the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Apostles
- ◆ recognise the influence of the Holy Spirit in our own lives through Confirmation
- ◆ recognise the Eucharist as the celebration which completes our initiation and that the Eucharist has been celebrated since the Last Supper."

(REvision 2000, Year 3, Spring 2 & Summer 1)

6. Workshop Activity for Confirmation

Give each group a copy of the sheet on *The Holy Spirit* and a pen/pencil or felt tip.

Invite them to spend ten minutes on this before displaying the sheets and inviting everyone to move round and look at the responses.

Some examples which may appear or which you can include:

- ◆ helping someone who has broken down in their car;
- ◆ taking notice of other people's needs and responding;
- ◆ sharing something you have with someone who has little;
- ◆ helping a colleague who is under pressure;
- ◆ being patient with someone who is very difficult;
- ◆ standing up for someone who is being spoken of unkindly;
- ◆ seeing the best in others;
- ◆ making time for people and listening to them.

Link these ideas and suggestions with the ideas the children will meet in their RE lessons (see 5 above).

Unit 6 – Section C

This section contains some practical points relating to the celebration of Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

The following practical points may need to be dealt with as part of the parent meeting(s) for this unit:

Sponsors

Children will need a sponsor for the celebration of Confirmation. This may be a parent, catechist, teacher, God Parent or another Catholic adult who has some significance for them. Their involvement in the celebration will need to be explained.

Names

Traditionally children have been invited to choose the name of a saint as a 'confirmation name'. This is not a necessity. Children can be confirmed in their baptismal name. Where new names are being chosen though, this should be clearly communicated to parents so that they are able to support their child.

Details

Practical arrangements (such as timing of the ceremony, seating in the church, etc.) may well need to be discussed, especially for those parishes that are celebrating Confirmation with the Bishop in a neighbouring parish.

Blessing

An invitation should be extended to non-Catholic parents or family members (or those unable to receive Holy Communion for whatever reason) to come forward with their child to receive a blessing, thereby sharing as fully as possible in the celebration of their child's First Holy Communion.

What Does Confirmation Mean To Me?

Choose the five words or phrases which are most meaningful for you

completing baptism

celebration

the Holy Spirit

wisdom

a slap on the cheek

knowledge

anointing

fear of the Lord

soldiers of Christ

leads to Eucharist

sponsors

oil of Chrism

laying on of hands

choosing a new name

Pentecost

making choices

growing up

the Bishop

prayer

gifts of the Holy Spirit

special occasion

What Does Eucharist Mean To Me?

Choose the five words or phrases that are most meaningful for you.

a shared meal

a special meal

sacrifice

passover

thanksgiving

thank you

holy communion

do this in memory of me

community

bread and wine

food and drink

a family meal

approaching the altar

spiritual food

Mass

a moment with God

love

Good News

receiving grace

the new covenant

a time of division

the lamb of God

judgement

paschal sacrifice

celebration

mystery

fulness of initiation

the risen Lord

prayer

new life

resurrection

one bread one body

a sign of peace

The Holy Spirit

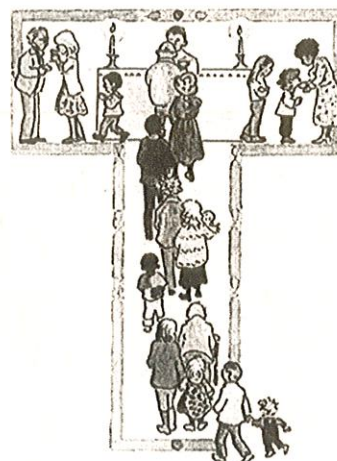
The Holy Spirit is within each one of us and can be recognised in our actions of love towards one another.

In your group write examples of some of these actions which we see and do in our everyday life.

What is the Church?

Parent Leaflet: Unit 6

We are the Body of Christ



Main Themes

The children, with their catechists, are looking at the way we meet Jesus and receive him when we receive Holy Communion

They are being asked to think about:

- ♦ The Mass as the Eucharist - the great prayer of thanksgiving
- ♦ Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion - the Eucharist which is the Body and Blood of Jesus given first to his disciples at the Last Supper

From Your Child's Worksheet

At Home...

Colour in this picture of Jesus sharing the Last Supper with his disciples and think about the words he spoke to them.



Write down some of the things that we can thank God for when we come to Mass - the Eucharist:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Prayer Before 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.

Prayer After Communion:

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.

This worksheet belongs to: _____

What You Can Do To Help Your Child

Remind your child of their Baptism when they were first welcomed into the Church.

Share memories [and pictures] of your own First Holy Communion.

Say the "Our Father" regularly with your child: it is the prayer which is prayed at Mass.

Try to share a meal with your family as often as possible and help your child to appreciate this gift of sharing together.

Bring your child to Sunday Mass and explain this is when as God's People we gather to celebrate and share a special meal together. At Communion time bring your child forward with you for a blessing. If you are not able to receive communion then join your child for a blessing.

Talk with your child about how, in a short time, they will be able to receive Holy Communion every time they go to Mass.

Help your child to complete their worksheet - especially the last page.

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

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

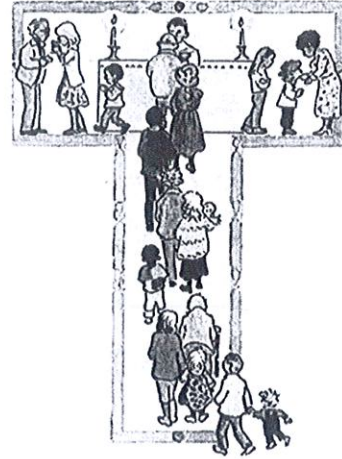
"...this table, ... is God's grace and gift. This is food for the journey that we began at Baptism."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 21)

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 6

We are the Body of Christ



C _ m m _ n _ _ n

Communion - the Eucharist - is a sacrament we can celebrate many times but our First Holy Communion is a special occasion.

In Holy Communion we receive 'The Body of Christ'.



Communion - The Gift of Jesus

Fit these words into
the gaps to complete
the story

eat
drink
body
blood
bread
wine

The evening before Jesus died on the cross he celebrated a special meal with his friends. This meal is known as The Last Supper.

During the meal, Jesus took b _ _ _ _ , blessed it and broke it and said, "This is my b _ _ _ which will be given up for you. Take it and e _ _ ." He took the cup of w _ _ _ , blessed it and said,

"This is the cup of my b _ _ _ _ which will be shed for you and for all.

Take it and d _ _ _ _ ."

He told his friends, "Do this in memory of me."

We obey this command when we come together at Mass and do what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

The Mass is also called 'The Eucharist' which comes from a Greek word meaning 'Thank you'.

The priest says the Eucharistic Prayer - a prayer of thanksgiving.



During that prayer, he takes the bread and the wine and says the same words that Jesus said at the Last Supper.

The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus and we receive Him in Holy Communion.



At Home...

Colour in this picture of Jesus sharing the Last Supper with his disciples



and think about the words he spoke to them.

Write down some of the things that we can thank God for when we come to Mass - the Eucharist:

Prayer Before 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.*

Prayer After Communion:

*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.*

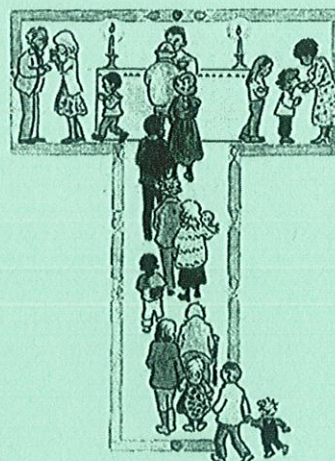
*I'm ready now, Lord Jesus,
To show how much I care.
I'm ready now to give your love
At home and everywhere.
Amen.*

This worksheet belongs to: _____

What is the Church?

Catechist's Guide: Unit 6

We are the Body of Christ



You will need to gather in the children's worksheets from the previous unit (unless this has already been done or unless they are keeping them at home). Even if they normally hand in their worksheets, they might want to keep hold of their last one if this unit is taking place during Lent so that they can complete the chart on the final page.

Spend a few moments seeing what the children remember from their last session with you - or from any celebration that took place.

Remind them that they are preparing to become full members of the Church family through Confirmation and Holy Communion and that this is going to happen soon.

The aim of this unit is to think about ourselves as the Body of Christ. This will be done by reflecting with the children on a number of themes:

- ♦ We will very shortly be celebrating Confirmation and Communion
- ♦ In Confirmation we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- ♦ At Mass we do what Jesus did at the last Supper
- ♦ In Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus

In preparation for this session, you will need to be clear about the arrangements for celebrating these sacraments in your parish (unless the children are to be told about those arrangements at some other time).

You might also like to look back over the previous sessions because there are a number of connections that can be drawn here.

INITIATION

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 6

**We are the
Body of Christ**



C _ n f _ _ m _ t _ _ n

and

C _ m m _ n _ _ n



These two important sacraments complete our initiation into the Church which began with our Baptism.

We celebrate them close together and in a very short time we will become Full Members of the Church.

Confirmation is a sacrament that we only celebrate once.

Communion - the Eucharist - is a sacrament we can celebrate many times but our First Holy Communion is a special occasion.

In Holy Communion we receive 'The Body of Christ'.



Confirmation - The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus returned to his Father in heaven, He promised his friends that He would send the Holy Spirit to help them to carry on his work.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his friends at

P _ _ t e _ _ s t

Jesus promises to send us the Holy Spirit so that we can carry on his work.

He comes to us first at our Baptism and we are renewed and strengthened in the Spirit at our Confirmation.

Just before we are confirmed, we renew our baptismal promises.

The bishop or priest who confirms us stretches his hand out over us and prays that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be given to us.

He then marks a sign of the cross on our foreheads using a special oil called Chrism and says:

_____ be sealed with the
gift of the Holy Spirit'

As this anointing is taking place, our sponsor stands with us and puts his/her hand on our shoulder. Our sponsor is someone from the Church family who will help us to live in God's ways.

We might choose a particular saint to copy in our lives and take that saint's name for our Confirmation name.



Page 1

Help the children to complete the names of the two sacraments - Confirmation and Communion.

Talk to the children about the fact that these two sacraments complete the initiation that started with their Baptism. They are about to become full members of the Church.

Draw out the distinction between Confirmation as a sacrament that we only celebrate once in our lives and Communion which we can celebrate often. Urge them to come frequently to take part in the Mass and to receive Communion.

Ask them if they recognise the picture of the body containing all the other bodies. It was the picture used for the first unit of their preparation (*We are the People of God*) and it shows how each one of us is part of the Body of Christ.

Talk about how Jesus needs us to be part of his body to continue his work in the world. That is why they are preparing to be full members of the Church - his body - his presence on earth.

Page 2

Ask the children to complete the word Pentecost and tell them the story of Pentecost Sunday [cf. *Additional Suggestions and Resources* No. 1].

Talk about Confirmation as the renewal or strengthening of the gift of the Spirit already given to us in Baptism.

Explain that the baptismal promises are a way of expressing our faith (in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and saying that we want to live in God's ways. [cf. *Additional Suggestions and Resources* No. 2].

Take them through the elements of the Confirmation ceremony as indicated on their worksheet, including, if appropriate, practical details relating to the parish celebration of the sacrament. [cf. *Additional Suggestions and Resources* No. 3 on Chrism].

Speak to them about sponsors and about Confirmation names and get them to write their name (or Confirmation name) on the line '_____ be sealed...' [They should leave it blank if they have not yet decided what name to use].

Communion - The Gift of Jesus

Fit these words into the gaps to complete the story

eat
drink
body
blood
bread
wine

The evening before Jesus died on the cross he celebrated a special meal with his friends. This meal is known as The Last Supper.

During the meal, Jesus took b _ _ _ _ , blessed it and broke it and said, "This is my b _ _ _ which will be given up for you. Take it and e _ _ ." He took the cup of w _ _ _ , blessed it and said,

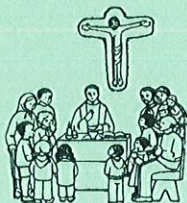
"This is the cup of my b _ _ _ _ which will be shed for you and for all.

Take it and d _ _ _ _ ."

He told his friends, "Do this in memory of me."

We obey this command when we come together at Mass and do what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

The Mass is also called 'The Eucharist' which comes from a Greek word meaning 'Thank you'.



The priest says the Eucharistic Prayer - a prayer of thanksgiving.

During that prayer, he takes the bread and the wine and says the same words that Jesus said at the Last Supper.

The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus and we receive Him in Holy Communion.

At Home...

Colour in this picture of Jesus sharing the Last Supper with his disciples



and think about the words he spoke to them.

Write down some of the things that we can thank God for when we come to Mass - the Eucharist:

Say this prayer to the Holy Spirit as you prepare for Confirmation:

**Come Holy Spirit, fill me with your gifts.
Help me to live as Jesus wants me to live,
loving God and other people.
Amen.**

This worksheet belongs to: _____

Page 3

Help the children to complete the story of Jesus at the Last Supper by filling in the missing words: bread - body - eat - wine - blood - drink.

Spend a few moments thinking about the word Eucharist meaning 'Thank you' and ask the children to think of some things that we should thank God for. Help them to see that one of the main things we thank God for is the gift of Jesus.

Remind them of some of the words they will hear at Mass when the priest is asking God to send the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus [cf. *Additional Suggestions and Resources* No. 4].

If appropriate, give practical details relating to First Communion in your parish.

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:

The picture is another reminder of the Last Supper. Can they spot the bread and wine and see Jesus blessing them?

There are lots of things to thank God for when we come to Mass. [They should just have mentioned some (cf. notes on Page 3) but this is not the time to fill in these lines].

The prayer reminds us to keep asking God for the gift of the Spirit and why we are asking - so that we can do His will.

Get the children to write their name on the worksheet and remind them 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. Encourage them to prepare well for the celebration of these sacraments and say how much you are looking forward to sharing those celebrations with them.

Additional Suggestions and Resources

1. The Story of Pentecost Sunday

It was Pentecost day and all Jesus' friends were gathered in the room where they had met for the Last Supper. Suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, and it seemed the whole house was full of noise. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire. These separated and came to rest on the heads of each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to preach the Good News.

2. Baptismal Promises

- ◆ These promises express the faith of the Church - the Body of Christ.
- ◆ When children are baptised, it is the parents and godparents who express their faith.
- ◆ As the children grow older, they can express this faith for themselves.
- ◆ We have opportunity each Easter to renew our baptismal promises (at the Easter Vigil).
- ◆ Although the children will renew these promises during the Confirmation ceremony, Confirmation is not to be seen as 'a sign of maturity'. It is a free gift from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, which *confirms* the gift of the Spirit already given in Baptism.

3. Anointing with Chrism

- ◆ Chrism is a special oil consecrated by the bishop on Maundy Thursday. It is used in Baptism and Confirmation (as well as Holy Orders).
- ◆ Anointing with oil is often a sign of strengthening a person for a particular task.
- ◆ The Chrism is used to 'seal' the gift of the Holy Spirit. Sealing something (in former times) was a mark of authenticity - to prove to the recipient that it was genuine. We are sealed with the Spirit as authentic followers of Christ.

4. Invocation of the Holy Spirit

- ◆ *Eucharistic Prayer I:* 'Bless and approve our offering; make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth. Let it become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord.'
- ◆ *Eucharistic Prayer II:* 'Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.'
- ◆ *Eucharistic Prayer III:* 'And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this eucharist.'
- ◆ *Eucharistic Prayer IV:* 'Father, may this Holy Spirit sanctify these offerings. Let them become the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord as we celebrate the great mystery which he left us as an everlasting covenant.'

What is the Church?

Celebration Guide: Unit 6

We are the Body of Christ

FIRST COMMUNION

1. This celebration is the culmination of the journey so far; by receiving the Lord in Holy Communion our children will enter fully into membership of the Church, God's holy people. It is also a beginning, as they look forward to the years of participation in this mystery ahead of them. In this celebration, the most important element of the children's participation is, of course, the reception of Holy Communion itself.

2. There may be several Masses at which different children receive the Eucharist for the first time. On Sundays, solemnities and feasts the Scripture readings and prayers are those appointed in the Missal and Lectionary for that Mass and Day.

3. Thought should be given as to how the children are to be prepared to participate in the Mass. During the celebration the element in particular which achieves this is the **reception of communion** itself.

Also of primary importance are the presider's homily and comments (and the commentator's introductions). All these will help the children, their families and all present to understand the completion of the journey of Initiation, as well as allowing them worthily to celebrate this great day.

FOR ALL CELEBRATIONS

Good preparation and communication is vital; all details should be worked out well in advance.

Readers, whether adults or children, should be chosen for their ability to proclaim the Scriptures clearly, with an awareness that God is speaking to his people in their proclamation.

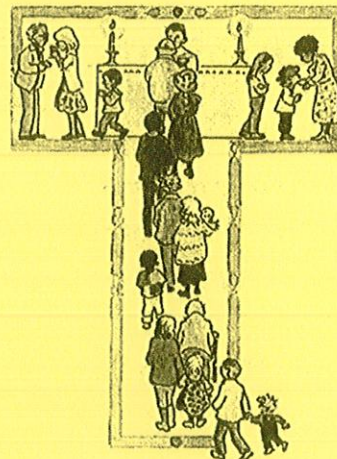
The role of the commentator is particularly important; commentators should also be able to speak clearly and with understanding.

Musical priorities in the Mass remain the Gospel Acclamation, the Eucharistic Acclamations ('Holy, holy', Mystery of Faith, Great Amen). Responsorial Psalms should be sung. Hymns should be chosen that are in keeping with the mysteries of the Church, the Holy Spirit.

FIRST COMMUNION

A Commentator may introduce the celebration:

Welcome to (name of Church)! Recently our children celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation - they were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift now makes them ready to share fully in the life of the Church. During Mass today, our children will take part in everything that happens: they will listen with



us, offer the gifts, pray with us and finally, share in the Eucharist at Holy Communion. Today they become full members of our family. We welcome them with joy. Let us begin our Mass by standing to sing:

Mass begins with the Opening Hymn and Entrance Procession. The priest may wish to welcome the children by name in his introduction. After the Penitential Rite and the "Gloria" the Opening Prayer is of the occurring Sunday.

Liturgy of the Word

The readings are of the occurring Sunday. The Homily should be based on the Scripture Readings, but also include some mention of the Journey of Initiation into the Church.

The General Intercessions follow immediately; they should include some prayer for the children receiving communion for the first time.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

It would be fitting for representatives of the children, their families and the catechists to take part in the procession of the gifts of bread and wine.

Mass continues as normal.

Communion Rite

The children come forward in the communion procession with their families. They may be invited to do so by name: all should be done with order and reverence.

Those members of families who will not receive communion may be invited to receive a form of blessing. It would be suitable to use the gesture of the laying on of hand(s) with words such as **"May God, who loves you, care for you now and always. Amen."** Eucharistic Ministers can also use this prayer. (The Trinitarian form of blessing and sign of the cross which occurs at the end of Mass, and which Eucharistic Ministers cannot use, is not recommended here.)

During communion suitable hymns or chants are sung.

Mass concludes as usual.

Suitable moments for commentators parts (or introductions by the priest) are:

- Before Mass.
- Before the Scripture Readings.
- Before the Eucharistic Prayer.
- Before the Our Father.
- Before Holy Communion.