

ST MARY'S CADOGAN STREET, CHELSEA

First Holy Communion Programme

By virtue of their child's baptism catholic parents have taken on the responsibility of being the first educators of their children in the ways of faith.

This was a solemn promise that was made by parents at the start of their child's faith journey, and now parents in our parish are called on to honour that promise as their children prepare to receive the Eucharist for the first time. At St Mary's this means that we will work with parents, so that they in turn can prepare their children to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

The parish and its catechists are here to help parents fulfil their responsibility. The First Communion Programme that we offer is designed for parents to reflect on their own faith journey and to give them the confidence to pass on the knowledge of the catholic faith, in an age appropriate way, to their children.

We are totally reliant on the good will of our parents to commit themselves to participate in the programme. We hope that when a child receives Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time they will understand, in as far as they are able to, the reality of what is happening. Ultimately it is the parent who is responsible for this.

Some parents may feel that they are unable to commit themselves to this task. In such cases it is understandable that they would not wish to embark on the programme that we offer here. However, if parents feel that they can help their children at this time and that they would like them to complete this next step on their faith journey at St Mary's, we would be delighted to work with and to help them.

The parents sessions are designed for adults only and we would ask that parents make provision for their children to be looked after for the six parental sessions.

SESSIONS AND THEMES

Session 1:

Introduction, how the programme works, children's spiritual development

Session 2: Reconciliation 1

The story of St Francis, Jesus and the capacity to love

Session 3: Reconciliation 2

Prayer, hurting others, forgiveness, reconciliation

Session 4: Eucharist 1

Preparing for Communion, my family and my community

Session 5: Eucharist 2

The Word of God, Thanksgiving and Remembering

Session 6: Eucharist 3

Jesus the bread of life, practical preparations

Each session begins in the church at 10am on Saturday and lasts for one and a half hours.

If a parent misses one of these sessions catch up sessions will be offered in the Thomas More Room the following week.

RESOURCES

Parents will be given two books which will form the basis of the programme. These books deal with Reconciliation and Eucharist and offer an age appropriate catechesis for your child. The books are called:

- We Prepare for Reconciliation
- We Share in the Eucharist

These book are distributed as part of the first session

PROGRAMME REGISTRATION

We ask that parents should complete a registration document from the parish priest or the parish office. These are normally available in late June.

STRUCTURE

The Parental Sessions are structured in the following way

- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Introductory talk- an overview of the relevant themes
- ❖ Small group work – thinking about faith
- ❖ Looking at the forthcoming chapters in the course book
- ❖ Sharing best practice – helping your child to understand
- ❖ Large group feedback – sharing any concerns
- ❖ Individual time – for parents to meet with catechists

ATTENDANCE AT WEEKLY MASS

Attendance at weekly Mass is mandatory for all Catholics. This is when the community gathers to reflect, to pray, to give thanks to God and to support each other. It is at Mass that the words of Jesus come to life, '*where two or three are gathered in my name there shall I be.*'

In order to pass on the habit of prayer to our children and to make all their preparations come to life we expect families to be at Mass over the weekend. We realise that occasionally other commitments or illness will prevent families from attending but we strongly urge them to prioritise the 10am Mass on Sunday mornings and we would encourage our First Communion families to volunteer for ministry at this Mass by welcoming, reading, singing in the choir and helping out with the offertory and taking up the collection. The more your family can be involved the more you will get from this whole process.

CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT

The children meet together for their First Reconciliation for the practice sessions as First Communion draws near and for the First Communion itself. If time allows we would also like to hold some activity mornings so that we can help to re-enforce what the parents are teaching.