

## Helping your children prepare for Holy Communion

Your children are now of an age where they are ready to enter into the next stage of their development in faith. You spoke for them at baptism. Now they are ready to start taking responsibility themselves for deepening the faith God has given them.

The Catholic Family, Parish and School each have a role and responsibility in helping children to mature as Catholics.

Our parish Communion programme builds on the teaching about our Catholic Christian faith (and the Mass and the Eucharist in particular) which children receive at their Catholic school; their learning is developed and supported by experience as they participate in Sunday Mass; and it relies heavily on your own role as parent – encouraging, guiding, supporting, talking and praying with your child.

## Helping you develop and deepen your own faith

Because of the importance of your own role as parent in handing on the faith to your children, the first part of our programme – the *Sharing in His Life* programme of daily reflections and a weekly meeting – is designed to help you refresh, renew and deepen your own understanding of the faith, and the Mass in particular.

## Children in non-Catholic schools

Children who attend non-Catholic schools will be admitted to the programme at the standard age, where there is evidence of the children having received Catholic religious education at home or in the parish, and attended Mass regularly on Sundays, at least during the year prior to the start of the programme. Where there has not been the case, a programme for a preparatory year will be put in place, to help the children be ready for the programme.

## Timetable

A detailed timetable will be available during the summer. It will give details of events for parents, children and the whole family.

One key event in the programme is the celebration of the Triduum (In 2012 Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and East-

er Day fall between 5th and 8th April). These celebrations are the high point of the Christian year and are a very important element in your child's preparation for his or her First Holy Communion. We provide children in this programme with lots of opportunities to take a very active part in the Triduum. *If holiday plans mean you are not in the parish for these celebrations, then please make every effort to take part in them elsewhere.*

## Group meetings and other programme events

- **Times**

We offer the parish programme to parents and children by means of small groups which meet over a range of times and days. However places in each group are limited and will be offered on a first come first served basis. It is difficult to manage people moving from one group to another once they have been allocated groups, so when the group details are available please choose carefully.

- **Commitment**

It is important to make every effort to attend the scheduled meetings. Offering you a range of options for the day/time of your groups, and giving you the dates of events well in advance, should make it much easier for you to plan around the programme. However each family has to take responsibility for ensuring it takes its proper part in the programme.

If you or your children are unable to attend any of the group meetings please ring the group leader in good time beforehand.

In the absence of other explanation, repeated absences from meetings will suggest to us that the family does not wish to continue in this year's programme.

## Sunday Mass

Weekly participation in Mass in the parish is a vital part of your child's preparation for Holy Communion. As well as being part of the natural rhythm of Catholic life, this weekly celebration of Mass will inform and reinforce the learning that Holy Communion programme provides to you and your child.

Throughout the year, elements of the programme will be delivered at Sunday Mass. These elements will be delivered at all the parish Masses over a particular weekend. It can be helpful to children if you choose a particular Mass as your 'regular' Mass - even if from time to time you need to attend another Mass due to family commitments etc.

### The programme at home

What happens in the home is a further essential element of the Holy Communion programme. We will provide a range of resources for your children, and for the family.

Your child's work book, *I Belong*, is an important learning tool. Reading the readings and prayers, completing the various exercises/puzzles etc helps the children engage with the topics in a variety of ways. Parents support can make a great deal of difference to how much the children benefit from the book. For example, help them be clear which part of the book should be done at any time (you will receive a schedule when the children receive their book). Review the work they do with them. Make sure they have their book up to date when they go to their group, and that they take their book with them to sessions. Additional material for use at home will be given at Mass and in the weekly children's newsletter.

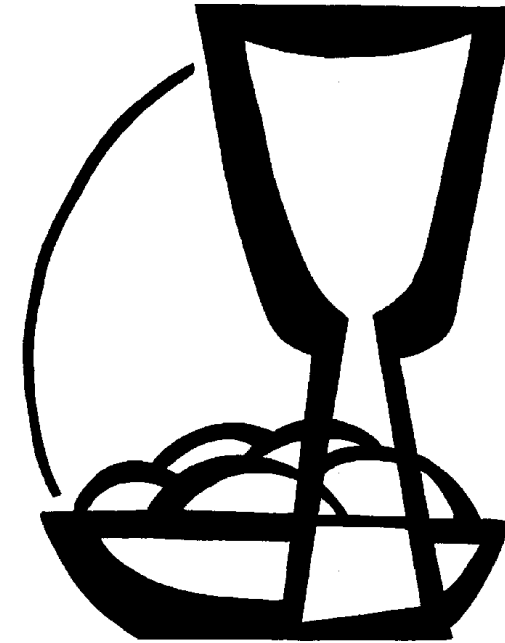
The programme as a whole provides a variety of activities for the family, all of which give opportunities for you as a parent to talk with your child, to support his or her learning, and develop his or her interests. 'What did you do today?' 'What did you learn?' 'What was most interesting?' Use their answers as a way into having a conversation, sharing together your faith and understanding.

Sharing your own experiences and reflections on faith with your children is a natural and effective way of helping them to develop. Many of us are hesitant about doing this, But your experiences in the parents groups will help you with this.

### Applying for the programme

Application forms should be returned to the parish house as soon as possible, and by the 4<sup>th</sup> September at the latest.

# Parish of Our Lady, St John's Wood



## First Holy Communion Programme 2011 – 2012

### Introduction

Thank you for your interest in our parish First Holy Communion Programme - and for the care you take over the spiritual development of your children.

Our parish programme is designed to support you as parents as the first teachers of your children in the ways of faith.

The guidelines issued for Westminster Diocese ask that children be prepared for their first Holy Communion when they are in Year Three. The programme this year is for children who were born before 31st August 2004.