

The Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation together are known as the Sacraments of Initiation through which our children become full members of the Catholic Church.

This leaflet explains how the children of St Marie's parish can continue their journey of faith and prepare to receive the sacraments of Eucharist (Holy Communion) and Reconciliation (Confession). As families and a parish community we want to help the children prepare in the best possible way.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted every aspect of our lives – personal, social, school, and spiritual – and we now have to find a way to move forward, catching up for what has been missed and finding new ways for the future.

We are people who journey together, supporting and encouraging one another; we believe everyone has something to offer. Therefore, within St Marie's parish we hope that a partnership between home, school and parish will provide the best environment for our children to grow in their understanding of the Sacraments.

We are very fortunate to have two parish primary schools, St Mary's and St Veronica's, both rated as 'Outstanding' in the standard of Religious Education they provide. Both schools' syllabus follows Salford Diocesan RE Guidelines, based around the 5 Ws: Word, Welcome, Welfare, Worship, Witness. Through the school the children not only learn about their Catholic faith but also experience it in action and celebrate it in worship and liturgy.

When you brought your child for baptism you accepted the responsibility to bring your child up in the practice of the Catholic faith, and the godparents and parish community promised to support you in this. You can now support your child in understanding and experiencing what it means to be part of our parish community. There are a range of resources available to help you as parents and families to prepare the children for the sacraments. Maybe have a look at some of these:

<http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/sacraments/first-communion/>

<http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/sacraments/parents-videos/>

There is also a series of home celebrations, including some time of prayer, scripture readings and discussions and an interactive online workbook:

[Heart-Speaks-to-Heart-Full-Programme.pdf](#) ([dioceseofsalford.org.uk](http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk))

At the back of church you will find the home celebration worksheets to take home to do with your child. Some families may like to get together to look at them. You may not be a Catholic, or you may not have practiced for many years, and so it can be difficult to talk to your child about religion. Hopefully the videos will reassure you and materials will help to guide you in what to say.

We hope you will find the questions and answers below helpful.

How do I arrange for my child to receive First Holy Communion?

The Church is the people of God; we are called through our personal relationship with Christ into a community, which is to be a sign of God's presence in the world today. We express our identity most clearly when we gather to give praise and thanksgiving to God through our celebration of the Mass.

It is important that you are able to show your commitment to the parish and your child's learning in the faith by coming to Mass regularly. This way your child will develop their understanding of the Sacraments and you all will feel part of our parish family. Fr John will make regular announcements at Mass and in the newsletter inviting any children ready to receive the Sacraments to come and speak to him. When you have been to Mass regularly, and you feel your child is ready to celebrate their Sacraments, please speak to Fr John.

What is the right age for First Holy Communion

There is no right age. Traditionally Holy Communion has been received from the ages 8-9 years. More important than age is your child's understanding of the Sacrament, for example, being able to make the difference between Eucharistic bread and normal bread. The disruption caused by the pandemic means there are children of a range of ages who have not yet been able to receive Holy Communion for the first time – their age does not matter.

How often do we need to come to Mass?

We hope you will not see this as coming to Mass only as preparation for the Sacraments but you will be regular parishioners at St Marie's, participating in many other aspects of parish life. Coming to Mass for at least four months is necessary before asking for your child to celebrate Reconciliation and to receive Holy Communion.

The children are therefore likely to be ready for celebrating their Holy Communion from Summer 2022, possibly earlier.

We attend Mass in another parish; can my child make their First Holy Communion at St Marie's?

Yes, please speak directly to Fr John about your circumstances.

My child does not live with me every weekend; can they still make be prepared to receive Holy Communion?

Yes, as long as you are regularly attending Mass at St Marie's when you can – and have spoken to Fr John about your own circumstances. It may be that your child is looked after in your care or spends time with another parent in a different area. None of that will be a barrier to your child's reception of the Sacraments.

Coming to Mass every week is difficult with other commitments and activities such as football & dancing lessons, and family time.

We appreciate there are many competing demands on families at the weekend. The first obligation you undertook for your child was at baptism when you undertook 'to bring them up in the practice of the faith.' There are two Masses – Saturday 6.30pm and Sunday 10am – these leaves one day entirely free for other commitments.

Can my child celebrate First Holy Communion with their school class?

We are not planning to hold class specific Masses. However, if a cluster of children are ready at the same time they can receive the Sacrament at the same parish Mass, or we may arrange an additional Mass, depending on numbers.

The schools may also hold some celebrations in the future when the children can come together as a class group.

Will there be enough space for my family and friends if my child celebrates the Sacraments at a parish mass?

We hope so as the church is big enough, but if there are too many children at one Mass we may be able to have an additional Mass.

Will there be any catechism sessions?

Yes, we will be holding parish catechism sessions for the children – Fr John will announce these at regular intervals going forward and they will be advertised on the noticeboard in the narthex.

Will there be meetings for parents?

Currently there are no parent meetings planned. However, if a parent wishes to discuss something with Fr John he will be very pleased to arrange this.

My child is not at St Mary's or St Veronica's school.

Please speak directly to Fr John, especially if your child is not at a Catholic school.

What can my child wear for First Holy Communion?

Whatever they want to! Some people like to keep to the tradition of white dress/ white shirt & red tie or school uniform but this is your personal choice.

How will my child make their first Reconciliation (confession)?

When your child is ready to make their First Holy Communion, Fr John will also arrange their celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

When will my child be Confirmed?

Bishop John has introduced a new approach to the celebration of Confirmation. Please see the information on the Diocese of Salford website www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk.

Lord Jesus,

Thank you for the gift of Yourself.

Thank you for the gift of Your Body & Blood.

Help me this day and everyday to welcome You with reverence and love,

And to continue to grow in love and friendship with You.

Amen.