Parish Partnership
Hartstown, Huntstown/Littlepace, and Mountview/Blakestown

www.mountviewblakestownparish.ie/

Parent's/Carer's First Communion Booklet

What would you like your child to remember about their First Communion in 20 years time?

Church of Saint Ciaran
HARTSTOWN PARISH

CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS
Huntstown / Littlepace Parish

St. Philip the Apostle
Mountview & Blakestown Parish

First Communion - An Invitation to Parents

Congratulations! It wasn't that long ago that you saw your child initiated into the Catholic Church through Baptism. The Christian family welcomed your child into the family of Church, into the community of faith. You may recall that this was only the beginning of this process of initiation. It was part of the formal path into full membership in the Church. Receiving the Eucharist for the first time is the next part of the journey.

Each week Catholics are invited to gather as a family to celebrate the Eucharist *(Mass).* During Mass, Jesus is present. He feeds us with his body and blood and continues to nourish us. At Mass Jesus continues to nourish us and is really and fully present.

As a member of God's family, your child is invited to join us around the table of the Lord and to take part in this feast by receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. Sometimes this is referred to as First Eucharist. First Communion affirms and deepens what you as a parent/guardian started in Baptism. It is a time when the choice you made in faith is now one you can share with your child. It is also public declaration of your faith and your wishes for your child. And it affirms that growing in faith is a life long journey.

You have the right and the responsibility to prepare your child for this sacrament. Faith is one of the most valuable gifts that you can pass on to your child. You are saying to them, as the Gospels tell us that no matter what life throws their way, they are never alone. *They are always and unconditionally loved, they are truly loveable and they can share that love with others.*

Your local priests, teachers and other personnel will assist you and your child but you are the major influence in this decision. Your words, attitudes and actions regarding the Eucharist will influence your child in a powerful way. The Eucharist will not just be a weekly routine but what Jesus meant it to be. It is a faith-filled experience that impacts daily life.

> "The family passes on human values in the Christian tradition, and it awakens a sense of God in its youngest members. It teaches the first tentative steps of prayer, it forms the moral conscience, and it teaches human love as a reflection of divine love.
> Indeed, the catechetics of the home are more witness than teaching, more occasional than systematic, and more daily than structured into periods."
> ***(Article 255 GDC in Plain English)***

These few handouts are aimed to be an aid to help you carry out this task. They will help you to reflect on your own faith and hopefully help you to deepen your understanding of Eucharist too. Helping to update your own knowledge and understanding of faith will also help as you guide your child in this important stage of life. This in turn will help to make the experience of First Eucharist more than an event to remember. If you are new to this, it will also help you begin to understand what role faith has in celebrating the sacraments.

This is all done emphasising four main pillars of faith:

Relationship - With God, with the Church, with community, with family, with …
Community - Eucharist means 'Thanksgiving', celebrating, strength, support, …
Service - Bringing peace, compassion, love, … Living the life Eucharist calls us to live!
Journey - Of Faith, Growth, Understanding, Communion, …

Hopefully this moment in your child's life can become a milestone that will continue to shape their life as they grow older.

May your child, through your guidance, come to know what a great gift Eucharist is.
Hopefully this encounter with Eucharist will lead them to enter more fully into relationship with Christ.
May the faith you have deepen as you pass it on to your child.

May this first communion be the first of many communions!!

First Communion - Your experience, Their experience!

Preparing for your child's First Communion is an exciting time and thankfully it's not a journey you make on your own. Think of it as *a **'Three-Legged Stool'**.* It is a new and deepening connection between your Home, the local School & the Parish. Each of these *legs* has an extremely valuable, important and supportive part to play. Each "leg" needs the support of the "other".
As parents, we can't underestimate or underplay the importance of our role, our influence, our own experience and our responsibility. Some might say that this goes without saying. *Religion begins at home. Parents are the first religion teachers and the most important of all teachers of religion.* Maybe, this is the best place to start.

Your own experience.

- What do you remember of your own First Communion, your First Penance, and your Baptism?
- What was your understanding of what you were doing? What was it all about?
- Has this changed over time?

Take some time to think about and recall your own experience, as a child, of your preparations during the year you were preparing for your own First Communion. Maybe try and find some old photographs and relive the highs and lows of the experience. Try to recall what was going on in your life around this time.

- What did you learn at home, in school and what was the involvement from the parish, from the priest?
- Who were the people involved?
- What did you understand about what you were preparing for and what happened on the day?
- What is the one lasting memory that stayed as you got older?

Why Not….

- Share some of your experiences, photos and stories with your child.
- Listen to what they are learning or how things may have changed?
- Listen to your child as they explain what they are learning and notice possibly how this may be different from your day.

Top things

parents said they remembered about their OWN First Communion

1. **Give us a twirl! –** *Being wrecked by the end of the day from spinning around, photo taking and not to mention the tummy ache after all the sweets!*
2. **White handbags thrown by the wayside –** *I pestered them for it, but what happened it on the day? It was just tossed to the side.*
3. **Adults discussing how much money/gifts that the children received –** *It seemed to be a fascination for our parents, uncles and aunts with phrases like, 'Can you believe that? "They only gave you how much??' "you wouldn't have got that in my day."*
4. **Being picked to do a reading or solo -** *And being the envy of the entire class.*
5. **Not being picked to do a reading or solo -** *Possibly feeling jealous at that lucky soul who got all the glory.*
6. **The frilly socks -** *The outfit was not complete without the gleaming white socks.*
7. **Jealousy** - *Of someone else's dress, suit, rosary beads, gifts, you name it we all experienced some sort of jealousy.*
8. **Not being allowed to use my jumbo Crayola markers for a week beforehand** - *Imagine walking up the aisle with a big blue stain on your hand? Those markers were not washable.*
9. **Putting on your outfit again for Mass the next Sunday** - *Cost per wear – Mam wasn't going to let me away with just one outing in the outfit!!*
10. **Communion getting stuck in the roof of your mouth** - *Just like they told us in rehearsals. Then…Frantically spending the rest of the Mass trying to remove it.*
11. **Whether to go out for a meal or have people back to the house** – *Decisions and politics!!*
12. **The house cleaning…** - *Shoes off as soon as we got in the door, backs of cupboards cleaned - not to mention the garden!!*

In 20 years', when your child is preparing with their own children for First Communion keep in mind the following,

What is the lasting memory you want them to have of their First Communion Year?
What is the understanding, learning you want to stay with them beyond this year?
Share this with your child.

Preparing for your Child's First Holy Communion & First Penance

St Augustine "Become what you eat – be what you are: The Body of Christ"

Family, Faith and forever!

Preparing for First Holy Communion involves family, faith and it is *forever*! It will include getting involved in new parish activity and participation. It will involve learning about our Catholic faith. It will also be practical as it impacts on everything in our life and continues beyond the walls of our local church.

First communion is an early milestone in your child's journey of spiritual growth. With your continued example and support your child will develop into a person who carries the spirit of Christ into the world. The Eucharist will not just be a weekly routine. It can become what Jesus meant it to be a faith-filled experience that impacts daily life.

In a same way as a parent you can prepare your child to encounter Jesus in the sacrament of penance. You are most likely working with teachers of religion, catechists to help you in this task. However, it is your personal witness and appreciation of this sacrament and your understanding of forgiveness that will demonstrate to the child the benefits of this sacrament.

Your child will soon celebrate for the first time the gift God has given us to help bring about peace and healing. It is the sacrament of penance or reconciliation. Our world cries out for peace and reconciliation. Relationships can break down including, relationships with God, with other people and with yourself.

You may not be familiar with many of the teaching of the Church but that doesn't really matter. You may not be familiar with the sacraments. You may have drifted in your commitment to the regular practice of attending Mass. No one is excluded from the love of God.

God always enables us to make a clean start, or maybe a fresh start. Following on from your child's baptism you child can participate in this sacrament. Your child can share in the gift which God enables relationships to be repaired and to bring peace of heart. Jesus assures us that God welcomes sinners with open arms, pardons us and rejoices over our return.

Forgiveness is for all of us!

Some practical ideas for parents

"Faith is caught more than taught" – *this idea used to be told to children.*

Prayer Let prayer be a natural part of your family. Develop and nurture your own family customs and special family occasions. Let your child see you pray. Pray together as a family. Continue to begin the custom of prayer before meals and night prayer. Before a child goes to bed invite them to bless themselves and make the sign of the cross. Set aside regular times for family prayer and take turns to lead it.

Celebrate Eucharist Worshipping together as a family at the same time has challenges and opportunities. Attend Sunday Mass together to celebrate Eucharist together as a family. Read and talk about what happens. Use the readings as a point of discussion. Afterwards maybe discuss the homily. Your child will follow your lead sensing if you really value Mass or not. Parents are called to begin to

introduce their child to a deeper and new understanding of being Catholic. Receiving communion for the first time helps to make this happen.

Read Scripture Invest in a family bible if you don't own one. Read it together and see what God might be saying to you. Use it at family gatherings. If Jesus is a valued member of your family your child will come to know and to love him as you do. By reading stories from Scripture, we all can learn more about the words and actions of Jesus is.

Make Sunday Special Make a point of doing something as a family every Sunday. Observe the day as a special day. It is a special day because it is the day our Lord rose from the dead. Sunday is a day for celebrating and we are obliged to attend Mass. It is a day for prayer, rest, fun and good works. It is a day for family and relationships.

Reach Out Show your child that as Christians we need to be engaged in doing spiritual and works of mercy even as a family. Reaching out to those in need and responding as a family can be an invaluable witness. We can help in different ways, for example, visit our older neighbours, relatives, donate food and clothes to charity, visit the sick in hospital or home, and help those who need help.

Be active in your parish Attending Mass can be more enriching if we get to know others who attend also. Join the parish for common events, parish functions and volunteer by taking an active role. Our parishes need everyone to have a role. Volunteers are needed to read, join the choir, just get involved and serve!

"Actions speak louder than words" – Nothing speaks more to children than witness and influence of a parent. These days of getting ready to celebrate First Communion in your family is an opportunity for the whole family to reflect on your relationship with God.

Learn About Your Faith Adults don't stop learning once school is finished. It is a life long journey. Our knowledge and familiarity with faith can grow and develop as we get older. Consider trying to deepen your knowledge of faith and your spiritual life. Attend some missions or family days of prayer or retreats. Make a point of buying some literature that is Catholic, this could be newspapers, books, videos and even find some websites that are appropriate for learning about your faith. There is an increasing number of "apps" for new forms of technology that can be fun for children to explore and learn about their faith. Forming another person in faith – is part of the challenge and decision to bring your child up in the Catholic faith.

Talk to your child about your faith! Many people are involved in helping you pass on faith to your child. This includes your local parish, maybe the school and parish preparation programmes. However, this does not mean that your child will know or understand everything. It is a good idea to review what is being taught at school, in the parish at home with simple conversations. Take an interest like you would with other interests your child has.

Preparing with your Child for First Communion

First Communion is not a private affair. It's not even just a family affair. It is an event and moment for the local faith community to celebrate this is known as the parish and this celebration is for the whole Church and for these reasons it can never be private.

A Parent's Prayer

Help me give my children the best...
not of trappings or toys, but of myself, cherishing them on good days and bad, theirs and mine. Teach me to accept them for who they are, not for what they do; to listen to what they say, if only so they will listen to me; to encourage their goals, not mine; and please, let me laugh with them and be silly.
Let me give them a home where respect is the cornerstone, integrity the foundation, and there is enough happiness to raise the roof. May I give them the courage to be true to themselves; the independence to take care of themselves and the faith to believe in a power much greater than their own. I ask this through Christ my Lord. Amen

The celebration of First Communion is not an end but is a sacred and important moment on a long journey of faith development. Together with Baptism and Confirmation, it opens the door to full participation in the Christian family.

The invitation this year is for you to take an active role as a family in preparing with your child.

- Parents are crucial people in their child's life and faith journey. You are now, and have always been, your child's first and best teacher. It is your example they follow. Preparation for the sacraments is a unique opportunity for parents and children to talk about their faith.
- It provides teachable moments at home and in church when what they are learning from teachers and books can be connected to what children see and live.
- It enriches the whole family. In addition to helping build a bond of faith between parents and the child undertaking the preparation, it provides opportunities for younger children to be introduced to elements of our faith and for older children to deepen their understanding of the sacraments.

How Can I prepare My Child?

Parents are called to begin to introduce their child to a deeper and new understanding of being Catholic and receiving communion for the first time is a help to making this happen. Worshipping together as a family at the same time has challenges and opportunities.

Many people have helped your child, such as, the parish, the schools and parish preparation programmes. All this helps to give meaning and understanding to what happens at Mass. However, this does not mean that your child knows everything. It is a good idea to review what is being taught or learnt at school or in the parish at home in simple conversations. Take an interest like you would with other interests your child has.

Talk to your child about "how" to receive Holy Communion, either using the tongue or on the hand. Similarly speak to them about the chalice – it's a sip not a slug!

How you can support your child?

There are many things that a parent can do.

- Make a commitment to yourself and your child to attend the parish programmes leading up to their First Communion.

- Attend all the local meetings and get involved in all preparatory events. Your attendance, commitment and involvement will not only show them the importance you put on this special part of their journey but it will send also send out a signal to your child that you care.

Remember many people are involved in helping you pass on your faith to your child in the parish and the school but this does not mean that your child will know or understand everything. It is a good idea to review what is being taught at school, in the parish at home with simple conversations. Take an interest like you would with other interests your child has.

Talk to your child about First Holy Communion and why they are receiving it. Talk to your child about your faith! Talk to your child about your own experience of First communion and Confession. Speak to them about how important Holy Communion and attending Mass was to other people either in your family or in history. Stories about faith help to illustrate the faith we believe in.

Regularly accompany your child to Mass Spend time with your child preparing for the Mass by reading the Gospel and Mass responses. Help your child with any activities they are asked to do at home.

- Become involved in planning and preparing the Sunday Family Mass in your parish.
- Create a family prayer space.
- Pray with your child at home.

Be the Message, Be the Example of what you want to pass on to your child

Setting up a Prayer Space in your home

A prayer or sacred space is a small area in which you can place symbols that help your child to sense and express that God is present in their lives. Children often use their sacred space at home as an area for the "holy objects" and art work that they accumulate from home, school, relations and parish. It doesn't have to be complicated. A window sill or corner of a table will do. Place a coloured cloth here with a Candle and any other sacred symbols that appeal to your child. Talk with them about the meaning of the objects and symbols they are placing in their sacred space. [1]

"Give us this day our daily bread" The Lord's Prayer:

Talk to your child about the people who inspire them to go good things. These can be Saints and/or family members or friends. If it is a saint encourage them to find out about them, the life they lived and the works they did. Maybe put a picture of them in their prayer space.

If a family member or friend, ask your child to write them a letter or send a thank you card saying why they find them inspirational!!

Encourage them to find out about groups, people or charities who are active in your area help those who are less fortunate or in difficulty. Make a point of visiting one or two if appropriate and ask your child to suggest how they or your family may do something to help these groups at different times of the year – Christmas, Easter, etc.

Suggestions for praying with your child

Use the prayers your child is learning at school. At the back of your child's school book there is a list of all the prayers they are learning. Use these during your prayer time at home!

Say a grace before meals when you sit down to eat as a family. Encourage them to pray for friends & relatives. Pray with your child before they go to sleep at night. This is a lovely time to talk over their day and to thank God for the good things in our lives and to ask God to bless all the people we love.

Consider taking your child to visit the Church outside of Mass times. It is often a much quieter and more

[1] They can be changed with the different seasons e.g. At Christmas and Easter. ***N.B. Always supervise children around lighting candles.***

personal experience. Perhaps light a candle and say a prayer for someone who is unwell or who has died, or maybe say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts that God has given to your family!

It's important to try to go Mass regularly with your child before Holy Communion, not only because they will learn from your example but also so that on the day of their own First Communion they are familiar with what is happening.

Choose your seat well so that the child can see everything that's happening and help them to become familiar with all the spoken and sung responses at Mass. Encourage them to join in the prayers and hymns.

Before their First communion, at communion time, they can go up to receive a blessing with their hands crossed in front of their chest. Use this as a practice time for developing some good habits for First communion and afterwards. Other ideas include:

- Fasting from food for one hour before Communion *(medicine and water are ok)*
- Walking to communion with hands joined with reverence and not looking at other people for attention.
- Not having anything in our mouth before we receive Holy Communion.
- Having clean hands out of respect for Jesus.

As we received Holy Communion either the priest or the extraordinary minister of the Eucharist will say "The Body of Christ" or The Blood of Christ, we respond. "Amen". Which means "it is true". Our Amen is an act of faith in the presence of Jesus. It is our Yes to Jesus.

For the First Communion Day…

- Invite other members of the family and friends to pray for your child not just on the day, but also during their preparation. And invite them on the day to go to and offer up the Mass that day in thanksgiving for the first communicant!
- Invite the child to write a prayer to Jesus before receiving him and maybe invite them to leave it in their prayer space.
- As the day gets closer talk to your child about "how" they wish receive Holy Communion. *Someone (either a priest of lay minister) will place the Holy Communion on their tongue or hand.* They have a choice and if they receive from the chalice, remind them that it is sip not a slug!
- Before the day maybe encourage your child to make and send out the invitations to the First communion Mass or the communion party to family or to friends. *Invite the local priest to the child's party even though they might not attend they will appreciate being asked!*

- With the connection with Baptism it's good to include your child's godparents as you plan this special day. They might have a special meal or quality time with the child. If they cannot be there – maybe they might make special effort to call the child before or on the day.
- There are a lot of customs around New Clothes for the Communion in some places it's wearing white for girls and a new suit for boys this may not happen in your parish. Increasingly most children wear school uniforms or an Alb to signify no difference. Do check out what is the custom in your parish.
- On the day give a religious gift to your child as a keepsake something symbolic like a child's bible, a prayer book, a crucifix or a medal.
- Take photos and video where appropriate of the day. Some parishes do not encourage photos or filming during the ceremony. Sometimes official photos are arranged by the parish so remember to find out!
- At the party celebration afterwards have a special cake. Also, maybe ask your child to light their baptismal candle, lead grace before meals and invite everyone at the celebration to join in!
- If your child does receive money gifts on the day, encourage them to give some to a charity linked to faith and action.

Wherever possible don't forget to continue these practices after the reception of the sacraments!

BECOME THE BODY OF CHRIST

After receiving Holy Communion there is a period of silence. A final prayer is then read reminding us about the sacred nourishment we have received. Again we respond Amen. We are then invited by the priest or deacon to leave challenging us to be Eucharist and the presence of Christ in the world in our home and in our place in society.

GO! *Conclusion and Concluding Rite -* ***"Go forth, the Mass is ended." "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."***

FAQ's - A Few General Questions and Answers for Adults/Parents:

What does Communion mean?

> *"That they may all be one, as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." John 17:21*

Sharing a meal is a sign of friendship, it can involve ritual, stories friends and family. To invite people to share our meal is to share our table and share our life. Our table at home is like Eucharist. It is intimate and personal, but not necessarily private!

Eucharist is a sign and source of Christian union. Whenever we gather at Mass to praise God we remember the saving acts of Jesus. We are bonded together more closely as the body of Christ.

Communion means *"in union with"*, under the appearance of food and drink Jesus is united with us and becomes part of us. We then become transformed to the degree that we allow to Jesus to affect us. Gradually we can take on the characteristics of Jesus. We copy *His love*, *compassion*, sense of Justice. As we try to become like him, His life increases through us and we become more like Him. The more we try to resemble Jesus, the more we are prepared to continue his work on earth. Eucharist makes us one family and nurtures our sense of belonging to God and one another.

At Eucharist we are united not only with the people who worship with us but also with the whole body of believers in the world. We are united with the faithful who have gone before us – the followers of God in heaven.

The more often we receive communion the greater our love for one another will become. If we are one we are responsible for the other members of God's family. God feeds us that we might feed one another. In John's Gospel – Jesus washed the feet - a model of service – a model for us. We wash one another's feet to serve others. This service – manifests our oneness in Jesus.

Why does Communion still look like bread and wine?

We are not the first generation of Christians to ask this question. Each generation has found answers to this through faith. The Church teaches that the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and blood of Christ is taking place below the surface that is in the "substance" of the bread and wine. What can be seen, tasted, touched and smelled is indeed the same as the bread and wine but there has been a read change. That we require faith to accept.

Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ when they are consecrated at Eucharist. We all become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Church also teaches in the Catechism that once the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ they remain so as long as the "appearances of bread and wine remain." They never revert. That is why we reserve the Blessed Sacrament in tabernacles. CCC1377

Christ is fully present in every fragment of the Host and fully present in every drop of consecrated Blood. A person receiving only the consecrated bread or wine receives Christ fully.

The symbolism of the Eucharist is a deep subject. It in no way diminishes the fact that a real substantial change has taken place.

Why is the Eucharist reserved in the Tabernacle?

Although the sacrament could be consumed in its entirety at Mass the Church from earliest times – the Church has reserved the Eucharist so that it might be taken to the dying as *"food for the journey." (Viaticum)*
It is also used for the sick of the community and for those who were for some good reason unable to be present for the community celebration. A local tradition of visiting the sick and the elderly and giving Holy Communion still exists in many parishes.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament allows an opportunity to adore God whether in the Eucharist exposition or benediction or in Eucharistic processions. The Body of Christ in the form of bread in the tabernacle provides excellent opportunities for private prayer.

The presence of the Blessed Sacrament is cause for the greatest reverence both during and after the celebration of the Eucharist.

What if someone who doesn't believe in the real presence receives Communion?

Faith plays a huge part in how we accept and understand real presence. When a nonbeliever for some reason receives Eucharist, Body and Blood they still have they received the real presence. Lack of belief prevents someone from having the spiritual benefits of Eucharist and "communion with Christ." However, there are many excellent parish resources, books and local faith based prayer groups that can assist people who want to deepen their faith.

The First Eucharist included the following….

- It was a moment of intimacy, between Jesus and His disciples.
- gathering around a table
- talking & listening,
- giving & receiving;
- word, bread, wine and
- Washing of feet.

The whole event was communion and although the event comes to an end, *the communion continues long after.*

What about Mortal Sin?

Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. While sin damages, and can destroy, that relationship (with Christ) the sacrament of penance can restore it.

How else is Jesus really present to us?

The Church teaches that Christ is present to us in other ways at the Eucharist besides in the Blessed Sacrament. He is present in the priest, the assembly gathered to worship, and in the Holy Scriptures. It is indeed a mystery that God became flesh in Jesus and that Jesus becomes present to us in sacrament and scripture.

Why Did Jesus give us this gift?

> *"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.*
> *Abide in my love" – John 15:9*

The answer is love. God is love. And it is the reason that Jesus gave us the Eucharist.
It is his love for us that prompted him to say The Eucharist is an expression of God's love for us a sign of the union Jesus wants with his disciples.

Inter-communion
If Unity is at the heart of the Eucharist why can't all Christians Protestants Orthodox and Catholics share Holy Communion?

This is a difficult challenge on whether non-Catholics can be admitted to Holy Communion or whether Catholics can receive Communion in non-Catholic churches.

> - "Strengthened in Holy Communion by the body of Christ the faithful manifest in a concrete way the unity of the people of God that this sacrament aptly signifies and wondrously causes.
>
> *Lumen Gentium 11.*

Different Christian denominations answer this question in various ways. Some Christians favour open communion. This is the position that says no one can stop a baptised person who believe in Jesus Christ from receiving Communion in any Church. They say this because open Communion is the preferred option because the last supper was a source of unity. Other Christians believe that the condition for receiving Communion in another church is unity of faith in the real presence.

Much progress has been done regarding our doctrinal understanding of real presence the Catholic position asks for more than common belief in the real presence. It is also related to the succession of bishops and true priesthood. For real Eucharist you need real priesthood. This is the Catholic position.

We cannot put forth signs of unity when obvious division still exists. Receiving communion from the same altar is not a form of unity especially when we go back to our separate churches later.

When is my child ready to receive Holy Communion?

- Any baptised person who realises that the Eucharist is not ordinary bread or wine but the sacrament of Jesus' actual presence. Those who desire communion may receive it. This presupposes that the person knows that Jesus is our God and saviour. These are the "best" people to determine whether your child is ready.

Must my child celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation before receiving communion?

- In general, the sacrament of reconciliation is required before receiving the Eucharist. It is the general norm however that the children celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation for the first

time before their First Communion.

My spouse is not Catholic, how do I explain to my child why his or her parent will not receive communion at the celebration of the Eucharist?

- Tell your child that receiving communion in a Catholic liturgy is considered a sign of unity within the Catholic church. If your spouse were to receive communion this would not be consistent with his/her own beliefs.

I am divorced and I have not been going to communion. Is it possible to receive communion when my child does?

- It is important to have a discussion with your local priest about your situation because some situations of remarriage differ. Your current marriage may be valid in the eyes of the Church. However, it is best to check this out.

I have not received Communion for a long time. But I would like to receive it with my child. What do I do?

- If you have committed serious sin you must celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation first. After receiving absolution, you may receive communion. If you are not practicing your faith you might find someone to talk with about some of your questions, past experiences, doubts or problems. Above all begin to pray for guidance on it.

Both of are not married but we live together. What should we do on Communion day?

- You may feel self-conscious about not receiving communion, especially if you are in a parish where parents and children sit together and receive communion together. In this case, it may be more appropriate to present your child for communion and you both receive a blessing. The local priest/catechist will advise on this. You may also consider talking with your child first to honestly speak to them about the situation you are both in. You might just say you can't follow all the rules of the Church now, so you can't go to communion. However, your presence on the day is very important. This might also help you consider receiving the sacrament of marriage in appropriate.

How often may Catholics receive communion?

- We receive Holy Communion whenever we attend and celebrate Eucharist unless we are conscious of an unconfessed grave or mortal sin. We must receive communion at least once a year, preferably during Easter.

We are a gay couple and wish to bring our child up as Catholic. Will this cause problems when we present our child which comes from a previous relationship?

- The child can still participate in the preparation for receiving the sacrament. However, it would be recommended that a private conversation takes place with the local priest. The important question is the intention of the child to fully participate in the life of the Church and attending the sacraments.

Some Questions that children might ask

How does Jesus fit onto the host?

- Jesus becomes present in the host in a mysterious way that we can't see with our eyes. Jesus can do anything even change bread and wine into himself. Don't forget he fed five thousand people with just five loaves and two fish!

Am I really receiving Jesus?

- Yes. You receive him today just as he is today with us glorified risen body.

How long does the bread and wine remain the body and blood of Jesus after it is consecrated?

- The bread and wine remain the body and blood of Jesus until they are consumed and digested.

If I receive just communion and not the blood do I only receive part of Jesus?

- No! Jesus is fully present in the bread and fully present in the wine. You receive the host you receive Jesus completely – even if you receive the smallest amount.

Is it right to chew the host?

- Yes, just the way you eat ordinary food.

How can we all be receiving Jesus at the same time?

- Jesus is God and can do anything. Moreover, his body is very different to ours. When he was on earth he was like us but now he is heaven. He has a "glorified body" and can be in many places at the same time.

Do I have to celebrate reconciliation each time before I receive?

- No, you can receive communion if you have not committed a very serious sin. Someone your age is not likely to commit such sins.

What should I say to Jesus after receiving communion?

- Say a short prayer. Talk to Jesus as your friend and saviour. Thank him for coming to you. Praise and thank him for all that he has done for you. Tell him how much you love him. Ask him to forgive you for times you came up short or was not the best person you could have been. Tell Jesus anything you want to tell him, special desires or things you are worried about. Speak from your heart.

Does it make any difference if I receive Jesus from a priest or from someone else *(lay person)*?

- No. Jesus is still present in the sacred bread and wine no matter who distributes.

What if I drop the host or spill the wine?

- There is very little chance that this will happen but if it does whoever is giving communion will help you.

Will I be different after receiving communion?

- You will look and feel the same, however the more you receive gradually you ought to become a better Christian!

Notes: