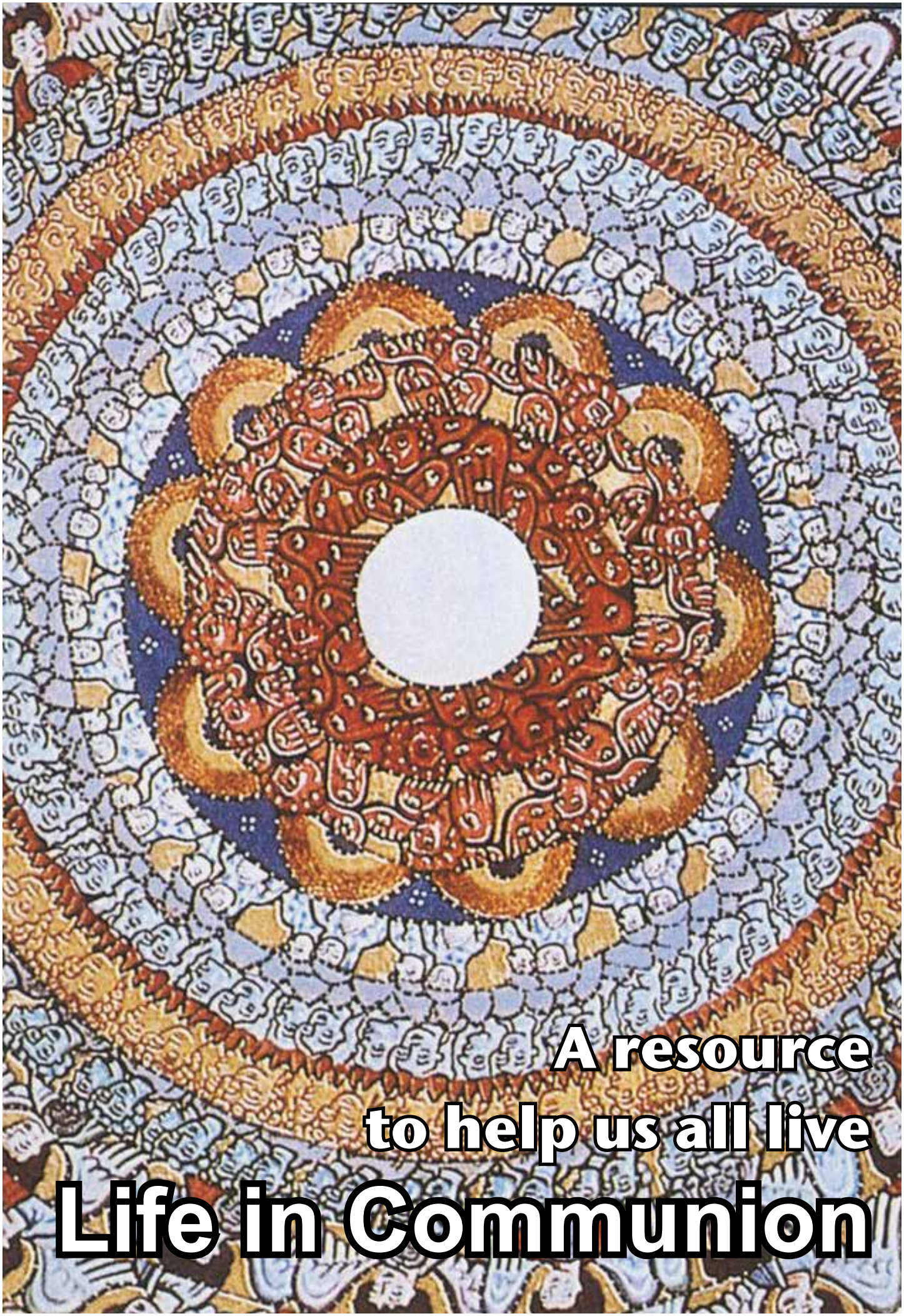

A resource
to help us all live

# Life in Communion

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**NB An electronic version of this document is available at www.stnicholasboldmere.co.uk/2026-7.html**

**You will find the on-line versioion most helpful when you want to follow up hyperlinks provided.**

**All future information about the programme will be posted there, so you might find it convenient to bookmark the link.**

**This Resource has been produced for use in the parish of St Nicholas, Boldmere.**


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# Introduction

Welcome to this resource which is offered as a support to the parents of children who this year will complete their preparation to receive the second and third of the Sacraments of Initiation: the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

The process of preparation for these Sacraments was entrusted by the Church to parents and godparents when you asked for baptism for these children.

This year, for parents, godparents and children alike that work of preparation steps up a gear as the children prepare to receive a new sacrament.

As many readers will know, Archbishop Bernard has called the whole Church that is in Birmingham to a work of renewal, and a fresh embracing of our mission.

This year in accompanying your children in their preparation you have the opportunity to engage with that renewal that Archbishop Bernard invites us to commit ourselves to.

> *We have a mandate given to us by Our Lord to spread the good news and serve and grow the faith for the coming decade and beyond.*
>
> *Pope Francis is encouraging us to do something new to help us achieve this.*
>
> *In [his letter] 'Evangelii Gaudium' Pope Francis encourages us, the Christian faithful, "to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation marked by this joy [of the Gospel] while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come."*
>
> *Pope Francis urged the entire Church "to embark on a new chapter of evangelism". The Church must understand itself as a "community of missionary disciples", who are "permanently in a state of mission". He says that "'mere administration' can no longer be enough."*
>
> *I have commissioned a number of groups who are looking at how we work in our parishes and in the Archdiocese to increase the opportunities that enable us to do God's work and to fulfil the promises of our baptism.*
>
> *I want us to look at how we will individually respond to God's call to be missionary disciples in the Church and in our local communities, working joyfully together to spread the Word and the work of God. In essence, how will we unfold God's plan for our diocesan church?*
>
> *When I look ahead, I envisage a Catholic diocese which is:*
>
> *Faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ*
>
> *Full of intentional disciples in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and others*
>
> *Where many more lay people are engaged in collaborative ministry*
>
> *How can it happen and what will that look like given the challenges we face?*
>
> *There are four areas I am asking us all to focus on: Evangelisation, Formation, Liturgy and Worship and Social Outreach.*
>
> *In our work on the four themes it is important that young people and families are a particular area of focus for all that we do. The universal call to holiness finds its first expression within families and its first recruits among young people. Catholic education and our diocesan youth services play an important role in serving families and young people. The links between the family, the parish and the school are vital to ensure that the faith is handed on.*
>
> *I invite you to join me in looking with fresh eyes at our mission. We must take this opportunity to do all we can to make sure the Gospel is seen and heard through the example of our daily Christian lives.*

I hope that you will find that this resource will help you to make the most of the opportunity of this coming year to engage in a fresh way with the significance of our community, of the word of God, of the ministry of the Sacraments and of the Eucharist in particular.

I hope this year will be good for you, for your children and help you together as a family to take up the call to be ministers for Christ in building up the Church of God in Birmingham and helping to further her mission to our wider society.

# The privileged work of giving witness to Gospel Life

At the end of the Rite of Baptism for Children parents are blessed with a blessing that speaks of the importance of their vocation as parents:

> *God is the giver of all life, human and divine. May he bless these parents who will be the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. May they also be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do....*
>
> *May they give good example so that their children will grow to be mature Christians in all the fullness of Jesus Christ...*

Parents have many privileges, They are the ones who first tell their children the story of God's love; of the wonders of the birth of Jesus; and of his Passion and Resurrection; of the help offered us in the Sacraments. It is parents too who — above all others— have the privilege of helping their children to learn how to live from the Sacraments.

It is by what happens in the home that parents are able to help their children develop a sense for the rhythms of the Church Year, which sets before us the life and mission of Jesus. And who day by day can show what it means to want to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who helps us imitate Jesus Christ in the way we live.

Parents sometimes wonder where to start! This booklet offers some suggestions.

But it is not all down to parents. Hard-pressed parents might like to invite the children's god-parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends and fellow-parishioners to join in — or even take the lead in helping their children engage with what this booklet offers.

Children who are at a Catholic school will find great help there too. But habits learnt at primary school can easily be discarded when a child moves to secondary school. Good practices engaged with at secondary school can be left behind when progressing to further education and the world of work.

The habits and practices and values of a family are not so easily discarded. They will not always be welcome to a child (!) but what is lived in the family is not so easily escaped either.

Sometimes parents 'do faith' for the sake of the children – to get them into a Catholic school; to ensure they 'make' their Communion or 'get' Confirmed. But this can be pointless and even harmful if a child's experience of the 'things of faith' are not integrated into life in faith, life in Jesus Christ.

None of us are perfect. All of us will do things with mixed motives. But this coming year is an opportunity to give new consideration as to the place faith has and might have in our lives and the lives of the children.

Responding to that opportunity can sometimes feel threatening and too challenging. However whatever we do will surely be responded to generously by the Lord. Often we will be presently surprised at how much we value the results of what we do and try to do.

## Communion through communication

This booklet is offered to help us all respond to the call of Christ — not to ask anyone to do the impossible. It is designed most especially to help us to **TALK** about faith and the things of faith.

It is conversation and dialogue that helps us most fruitfully engage with faith and memory and meaning. It is when we talk with each other and the Lord that we find ourselves most easily and naturally making and seeking the connections that build up Communion.

Such conversation and dialogue are at the very heart of the Communion of the Church

- God speaks to draw us into communion with himself and each other.
- God's Word takes flesh as Jesus to speak with us through his life and actions, his words and his deeds.
- We speak God in prayer
- We speak with each other to share and develop our communion with each other and with God.
- We are missioned to speak with others , taking up our responsibility to let the Gospel be heard throughout the world

Communion is God's gift to us, and communion is what we Catholic Christians are called to live and to share..

# Communion: God, Church, Eucharist

## Holy Communion

We generally use the phrase 'Holy Communion' to the food and drink of the Eucharist: the food and drink that truly is Christ with us. The phrase is also a good description of what the Church is, and what God invites us to.

## The Body of Christ

The phrase 'the Body of Christ' is used as a profession of faith before we receive the Bread of the Eucharist in Holy Communion. 'The Body of Christ' is also what the Church — through baptism we become members of that Body, of which Jesus himself is the Head.

## Symbolic realities, symbolic actions

This dual usage highlights how the realities of Church and Eucharist are closely bound together.

It is sometimes said that 'the Eucharist makes the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist'. People discuss which comes first. It's a little like the conundrum about which comes first the chicken or the egg!

Pondering the conundrum does not lead to the RIGHT answer. But it can help us to a deeper appreciation of the holiness and richness of Church and Eucharist .

Sometimes Holy Communion', 'Body of Christ', 'Church' and 'Eucharist' are considered simply as nouns describing 'things'. But we get closer to understanding what they refer to when we think of them as verbs, describing 'actions' – ways of being –in which Jesus makes himself present and active us. He makes himself present to us, and gives us the opportunity to respond to him in faithful living and prayer..

It is in the celebration of the Mass that the two realities – Holy Communion and the Body of Christ – become visible.

- The Body of Christ becomes visible as we gather at Mass. You might say we are more or less 'anonymous' as we go about much of our daily lives. But when we assemble in church we are seen as community: members of his Body by Baptism!
- And during the Eucharistic Prayer the bread we see at the altar becomes his Body and Blood, to be offered to the Father, and to be shared in by us in Holy Communion.

We are members of his Body; we are fed from his Body and Blood that Christ can live in us and we might have life in him.

That **'we'** might have life in him. Jesus knows and speaks to each human heart individually, but he does not call us to individual and private relationship with him. He calls us to himself together — to be in communion with him and in each other: to be his Holy Church, the Body of Christ.

### Jesus present to us and for us

Jesus' personal presence for us in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood is one of the greatest treasures of the Church. How could it be otherwise?

But Jesus is not only present for us in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist.

The Church teaches that at Mass Jesus is truly and personally present for us in several other ways also. There are several equally real but distinctive ways in which Jesus is present to us — and through which we can be present to him.

- He is present to the community that comes together in prayer and song. Indeed, he is present, **as** the community of the baptised who are the Body of Christ
- He is present in the Scriptures 'It is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church.'
- He is present in the ministry of the priest, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross.'
- He is present in the sacramental food and drink

Present to us in each of these ways, Jesus seeks to use them to engage with us and draw us to the fullness of life.

# The parish programme to help parents prepare their children to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion

Programme dates are on the parish website: www.stnicholasboldmere.co.uk/2025-6.html

***You will find it helpful to bookmark this address, as it is where all future information will also be posted.***

The programme has two parts.

The first, covered in this booklet, is a common programme for all children and their families.

The second provides additional input for children who are not attending a Catholic school. programme is provided for children who are not in a Catholic school.

## The Basic requirement

All children preparing for first sacraments are expected to take part in the celebration of Mass each Sunday.

## 'Programme' Masses

Roughly once a month there will be a 'programme' Mass here at St Nicholas parish. At these Masses the programme themes will be explored/celebrated in some way.

The timetable is on the dedicated webpage (deatials above) and the back page of this booklet.

***All children who are part of the programme are expected to take part in these parish masses.***

## This Booklet

This booklet offers introductory material to help Catholic parents understand what they are invited to, and provide information to non-Catholic parents so that they may feel better able to participate to the extent they choose. A couple of pages of background information is provided for each theme. Parents are encouraged to read this during the week between the 'programme' Masses. This can help them feel better equipped to have their own conversations on the theme with their children, respond to children's questions, and support the work they do to enter the competitions.

## Competitions for the children

For each of the these of the programme there is an activity which children are invited to complete and submit for display in the church. From time to time prizes will awarded for best submissions from children preparing for Communion, and those preparing for Confirmation.

The activities should be done during the week **AFTER** the theme is explored at Mass, and then handed to Fr Allen at Mass the following Sunday. Each month there will be two prizes.

## Service Projects

All children in the programme are invited to volunteer for parish service projects, based here at St Nicholas parish. Some suggestions for ways of service are given below, on page 23.

Those preparing for Confirmation are also invited to unite their Service project with the Diocesan Faith in Action scheme (a sort of Catholic 'Duke of Edinburgh scheme). There are opportunities to continue the FIA as children progress into Secondary education). More details from Fr Allen.

## Family activities

In the following pages, in addition to the competitions, a variety of some simple activities are proposed that families can do together, to help prepare their child for a deeper participation in the life of Christ and in the life and mission of the Church. This is particularly the case with the 'Communion with the Church theme, offering suggestions of things some families may be free to pursue over the summer break.

Have a read through the booklet and see what is suggested. The suggested activities are highlighted for your convenience. Families are — of course — also free to explore any of these 'ways' and do the exercises at their own pace. Sometimes they will may find it helpful to do them in a different order to that which is presented here.

## Additional events for families

During the year there will be a variety of events for the families of children who are part of the parish programme.

## Parents supporting each other

**It is intended to offer an opportunity for parents of children in the programme to meet over tea/coffee the**

***Any questions? Please see Fr Allen.***

# Communion with the Church

There are two dimensions to the communion of the Church. First the communion we enjoy as a community gathered for Mass. Second, the communion that we are part of as members of our local Church — the Archdiocese of Birmingham

## 1. The community at Mass

### That community is Christ...

Christ is present to the community that comes together in prayer and song, and, indeed, present as the community of the baptised who are the Body of Christ.

When we pray at Mass we pray not only as ourselves, but most importantly we pray 'in', 'with' and 'as' Christ. Our prayer is joined with his prayer, and we give thanks and make offering of ourselves to the Father, with him.

### Who prays the Mass?

First and foremost it is Christ.

We pray, of course, but we pray in and with him. This is because of our baptismal identity with him, because we are his Body. We share in his priesthood, and we participate in his prayer.

### Living the Mass

The Mass is offered to us that we might be strengthened to live as Christ in the world.

Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full.We surely know that. It is why we confess him our Lord and Master.

But he comes not just for us. He comes for the whole world. And so, in imitation of him, the community that is the Body of Christ is called to be Christ for the world.

St Theresa of Avilla put it this way

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,*
*no hands, no feet on earth but yours.*
*Yours are the eyes with which*
*he looks compassionately on this world.*
*Yours are the feet with which*
*he walks to do good.*
*Yours are the hands,*
*with which he blesses all the world.*

We will come back later to the mission of Christ, and our part in that. For now let's stay with our being at one with Jesus, through our baptism, our being 'in' Jesus.

### Living 'in' Christ

The language of living 'in' Christ comes to us from St Paul.

In his letters he uses it to express the intimacy that we (as individuals and as the community of the Church) are called to in our relationship with him. It is an intimacy that we can desire and thatis made possible by the Sacraments of Baptism.

## 2. The community of the Church in Birmingham

There are a number of ways in which you can explore enjoy, and share with your children, how you and your family relate to the community of the Church in Birmingham.

### The Church at St Nicholas, Boldmere

- What do you know about the history of our parish community and the church we worship in? You can find an outline of our history at www.stnicholasboldmere.co.uk/parish-history.html
- How long has your own family history been part of our history? What stories of the past can you remember and share - or your parents and grandparents?
- Do you remember who helped you learn about our faith? Maybe priests or catechists, teachers, leaders of parish groups etc.? Or, of course, members of your own family and friends – parents and grandparents, god-parents and sponsors. What do you remember of those who helped you learn? And what did you learn for which you are most grateful.

### The wider Church in Birmingham

Our parish is part of the family of parishes that form the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

The family is gathered into groups of parishes known as clusters, and those clusters into groups known as Deaneries. We are part of the Catholic Sutton Coldfield cluster, and of the North and East Birmingham Deanery.

The Archdiocese is led by Archbishop Bernard Longley

- Have you or your family had connections with other parishes in our deanery or Archdiocese? Where were they baptised?

Where did they go to celebrate Mass? Where were they confirmed or married? Where were they buried? What stories can you uncover and share?

- Which of the bishops of the Archdiocese have you met or known? Who confirmed you or your parents? If you don't know – see if you can find out.
- You can find out about the present Archbishop and his auxiliary bishops at www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/our-bishops

## The history of the Church in Birmingham

The Church in Birmingham has a rich history – going back at least to St Chad who was the first Bishop of this area, and around whose shrine Lichfield Cathedral was built.

Other local saints from before the Reformation include St Wulstan, and Birinus and Kenelm. And during the tragic times of the English Reformation there were many Catholics in these counties who kept the faith during the times of persecution, including many who were martyred because they were Catholic.

In the years since particularly notable have been Blessed Dominic Barberi and St John Henry Newman, who lived for a time at Maryvale and served as priest in Birmingham.

- Do you remember Pope Benedict's visit to Birmingham and Oscott when Cardinal Newman was beatified? Share your memories with your family Read about it at https://thepapalvisit.org.uk/replay-the-visit/
- Make a visit to Lichfield Cathedral or to St Chad's, the current Catholic Cathedral of Birmingham. (Helpful parish guides, to make sure you don't miss out some important things, are available at www.stnicholasboldmere.co.uk/saint-chads-and-lichfield-cathedrals.html
- Visit one of the historic houses that played such an important role during the time of persecution
  - Harvington Hall: www.harvingtonhall.co.uk/
  - Moseley Old Hall: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/shropshire-staffordshire/moseley-old-hall
  - Boscobel House: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/boscobel-house-and-the-royal-oak/
  - Coughton Court: https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/warwickshire/coughton-court (NB Presently a lot of work is being done on this site. Wait until 2025 to visit - and check first.)

## And the still greater Church

Our Archdiocese is part of the family of Diocese around the world, all in communion with the Pope, Pope Francis.

- If your family history has connections outside of Birmingham what were they? Down through the centuries, through immigration, the Church in Boldmere and in Birmingham has received fellow Christians from all over the world. What might we learn from the history of the Church elsewhere?

### There is also more to the Church than immediately meets the eye...

### The Church on earth

The community of the Church on earth extends to the four corners of the earth, formed from all the baptised.

As Catholics we are fully in communion with all Christians who are fully in communion with the Pope – Roman Catholics, Catholics of the Eastern Catholic churches and so on.

We are also closely united through baptism with Christians of all denominations – Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist and so on. Our unity in Christ is more profoundly based than any 'separation' brought about by history, or how we understand or practice aspects of faith and by our different histories and cultures.

### The Church in all time and all 'places'

The community of the Church extends through history. It extends back to the time of Jesus and then further back still through the history of the Jewish people, And it extends forward already joined with the community of love that is one with God for all eternity.

***The community of the Church includes all the faithful - the living and the dead. (Though for the Christian 'death' is relative. The 'dead' live still in Christ.)***

***When the Church gathers for prayer we gather in communion with all the faithful - those living throughout the world, and with the Church in heaven with the faithful departed, with saints and angels. The Church extends across time and beyond this visible world.***

# Communion through the Scriptures

## The Word of God

For Christian the Word of God is Jesus Christ.

One of the places where we can have personal encounter with the living Word is in the words of Scripture.

Most especially the Word of God speaks us with through those words when the Scriptures are proclaimed. The words themselves are not God, no more than what is visible of God's faithful people gathered in worship, or what is visible of the consecrated Bread and Wine are God. But God speaks to us through them.

More than that, we believe that the words themselves are inspired. Their authors wrote what they wrote – histories, letters, poems, stories – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They wrote as human authors – and with the regular limitations of human authors. But what they wrote to describe God's relationship with humankind is now used by God for God's purposes – to draw us into fresh relationship with him, to write salvation history now with our lives.

## What is the Bible?

The inspired writings of Scripture have been gathered by the Church into our Bible.

Our Bible, then, is not a single book, but a library of books. Or, more accurately, two libraries. The first is the library of the ancient Jewish writings, which we usually call the Old Testament. The second, the library of Christian writings, that we call the New Testament.

The library that is the Bible contains all sorts of different sorts of writings. It contains

- histories - such as the *Acts of the Apostles* or I and II Kings
- works of fiction such as *Job* and *Jonah*;
- mythical and legendary stories such as the stories of Creation and the Flood in Genesis.
- letters or homilies – many of them written by St Paul.
- poems and songs – such as the *Psalms*, including the Psalm 23 'The Lord is my shepherd...'
- prophecies such as the Book of Isaiah that offers challenge and encouragement to Israel and to us.
- And the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, each of which in their own way that tells us of the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and its meaning.

All of these different sorts of writing are inspired by God so that in their different ways, they invite us to live as faithful children of the Father. God speaks through the Scriptures, calling us to know, trust in and receive his goodness, love and care.

The Scriptures invite us to learn from our history how to live our relationship with God today, how to receive and enter into the fullness of communion with God in Jesus Christ.

### Helping ourselves to better hear and understand the Word of God at Mass

At Mass we hear a number of readings, and of different sorts. If we are not already familiar with them and with where they come from we can find it difficult to make sense of them - at least at first.

The Church's presumption is that we will already be familiar with what is read — from our reading of the Bibile, and our religious education more generally. It does not always work out that way!

So to help us better listen and be fed by the word, it is a great help to read them before hand, even to look up anything we simply do not know. When we hear them again at Mass we will then be able to focus on what does mean something to us and not be distracted by what we do not know.

It is also really helpful to return to the readings again in the days after Mass. There is very likley a word or phrase that catches your attention - and that is good to bring to prayer, so we can speak with the Lord about it.

It is a great help for children if their parents help them beforehand to become familiar with the scriptures they will hear at Mass -at least the Gospel reading.

Chatting about the readings as a family after Mass is a great way of helping young and old-(er!) to develop the expectation that the readings really do have something to say to us. It is particularly helpful in preparing children to learn to get the most out of our Sunday readings now and in the future.

Recently Pope Francis wrote the following Preface to an edition of Scripture for Young People:

*My dear young friends:*

*If you could see my Bible, you would not be particularly impressed. What—that's the Pope's Bible? Such an old, worn-out book!*

*You could buy me a new one for $1,000, but I would not want it. I love my old Bible, which has accompanied me half my life. It has been with me in my times of joy and times of tears. It is my most precious treasure. I live out of it, and I wouldn't give anything in the world for it.*

*I really like this new Youth Bible. It's so colourful, so rich in testimonies: testimonies of the saints, testimonies of young people. It is so inviting that when you start to read at the beginning, you can't stop until the last page. And then ...? And then it disappears on a shelf, collecting dust. Your children find it one day and bring it to the flea market. It must not come to that.*

*I'll tell you something: There are more persecuted Christians in the world today than in the early days of the Church. And why are they persecuted? They are persecuted because they wear a cross and bear witness to Jesus. They are convicted because they own a Bible. The Bible is therefore a highly dangerous book—so dangerous that you are treated in some countries as if you were hiding hand grenades in your closet. It was a non-Christian, Mahatma Gandhi, who once said: "You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilization to pieces, turn the world upside down, and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature."*

*So what do you have in your hands? A piece of literature? Some nice old stories? Then you would have to say to the many Christians who go to prison or are tortured because they own a Bible: "How foolish you are; it's just a piece of literature!" No. By the word of God has Light come into the world, and it will never go out. In Evangelii Gaudium (175) I said, "We do not blindly seek God, or wait for him to speak to us first, for 'God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us.' Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed word."*

*So you have something divine in your hands: a book like fire! A book through which God speaks. So notice: The Bible is not meant to be placed on a shelf, but to be in your hands, to read often—every day, both on your own and together with others. You do sports together or go shopping together. Why not read the Bible together as well—two, three, or four of you? In nature, in the woods, on the beach, at night in the glow of a few candles ... you will have a great experience! Or are you afraid of making a fool of yourself in front of others?*

*Read with attention! Do not stay on the surface as if reading a comic book! Never just skim the Word of God! Ask yourself: "What does this say to my heart? Does God speak through these words to me? Has he touched me in the depths of my longing? What should I do?" Only in this way can the force of the Word of God unfold. Only in this way can it change our lives, making them great and beautiful.*

*I want to tell you how I read my old Bible. Often I read a little and then put it away and contemplate the Lord. Not that I see the Lord, but he looks at me. He's there. I let myself look at him. And I feel—this is not sentimentality—I feel deeply the things that the Lord tells me. Sometimes he does not speak. I then feel nothing, only emptiness, emptiness, emptiness.... But I remain patiently, and so I wait, reading and praying. I pray sitting, because it hurts me to kneel. Sometimes I even fall asleep while praying. But it does not matter. I'm like a son with the Father, and that is what's important. Would you like to make me happy? Read the Bible!*

- What encourages you in what Pope Francis says?
- What challenges you?
- What is there in his words you would like your children to understand?

**Share how Scripture has helped you.**

Choose a favourite story from the Bible – and tell the story to your family in your own words. Be sure to say what you learn about God from the story.

Perhaps particularly with older children, they may find it helpful to hear from their parents/sponsors etc. about how the scriptures have been helpful to them at different times.

Maybe it was a reading chosen for a wedding, or a funeral, maybe a reading from Sunday Mass that just 'appeared' at just the right time.

- Share your story, encourage their faith.

# Communion through the ministry of the priest and the Sacraments

The Church teaches that, by virtue of his ordination, the priest serves *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. Jesus is present for us by virtue of the priest's ordination.

Jesus is still Jesus, and the priest is still himself. But in the same way that all of the visible and measurable features of bread and wine remain after the bread and wine become Jesus in the Eucharist, so with the priest in his ministry.

The priest is still himself in all his visible aspects. But when he exercises the ministry entrusted to him in ordination, he ministers in Christ's name. Indeed, truly it is Christ who ministers in the priest, as him.

This is particularly the case when the priest presides at celebrations of the Word and the Sacraments - the priest ministers to us, and through him, Jesus minsters to us

### Jesus works through the Sacraments

In each of the Sacraments Jesus reaches out to us, and also takes up what we bring in praise and thanksgiving to God and gifts it back to us, infinitely enriched by his grace.

He does all this to help us live life faithfully and well. What is given us is for our own good, and also to help us in what as Christians we are called to do and be for the world.

## Baptism

*Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20

Through the Sacrament of Baptism — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## Confirmation

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and hit filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

*Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ...And they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ... We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"*

*... Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ...in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, ... before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"*

cf Acts 2

Through the Sacrament of Confirmation — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## Reconciliation

*On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

Luke 5.1-11

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## Anointing of the Sick

*And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

*And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*

Mark .21-31

Through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## Experiences to share...

Many parents will have celebrated six of these sacraments.

You might dig out the family photographs: of your family celebrations - maybe even of grand- or great-grandparents baptism or marriage days

The children preparing for Holy Communion will have only celebrated Baptism, and for most of them that will have been befoe they were forming memories.

Those who are preparing for Confirmation will have celebrated Reconcilation and Eucharist.

You are likely to have much more experience of the sacraments than they have. It can be helpful for them if you and their sponsors and others can share your experience of what it was like when you celebrated the first Sacraments, or Confession, or Matrimony etc.

## Matrimony

*Jesus said to his disciples "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

*And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*

Matthew 7:21, 24-25

Through the Sacrament of Matrimony — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## Ordination

*And through the ministry of the Bishop (the high priest of the local Church) at ordination?*

*Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."*

John 21:15-19

Through the Sacrament of Ordination — what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

## A couple of tricky questions?

Some Sacraments do not have to be ministered by a priest. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate for the Sacrament to be ministered by a deacon or a lay woman or lay man. Which might these be?

1.

2

And one of these, under the current law of the Church may not be ministered by a priest. Which might this be?

1.

## What about Eucharist?

***Don't worry. It's not been missed out.***

***It gets its own special section over the next two pages.***

## The Eucharist

*The disciples and Jesus (who as yet they had not recognised) drew near to the village to which they were going.*

*He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.*

*When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.*

*They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"*

*And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Luke 24:28-35

Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist— what gifts do we receive from the living God and what does the Sacrament call us to?

# What are we talking about, when we talk of Eucharist?

The word 'Eucharist' describes the whole action of the sacramental celebration that is the Mass. It includes our gathering, our prayer and song, the ministering of Word and Sacrament, and our being sent out to continue the mission of the Church entrusted to us.

As noted on page 5, it is helpful to think of all of the Sacraments of the Church as actions, symbolic actions, their titles verbs, in which Christ acts and by which he is personally present to us.

This page opens with the story of disciples on the first Easter day, journeying to Emmaus and meeting with the Lord, present to them, but also hidden from their sight. They do recognise him in the Breaking of the Bread, but he vanishes from their sight. Still, they are renewed and have a work to complete

It is a story that offers many points of connection with what happens when we celebrate Mass — communion in dialogue and presence, Word and Sacrament: Eucharist.

We use the word 'Eucharist' also to refer specifically to the Eucharistic food and drink itself. And it is especially that Eucharistic food that is focussed on in these present pages.

### Sacrifice and Communion

At Mass bread and wine is taken and used so that Christ might give himself to us as food and drink. Bread broken and Wine poured out become Jesus who gave and gives himself as Sacrifice to the Father, in loving service of God and of humankind.

This is no new sacrifice. It is the once and for all sacrifice of Calvary again made present in the sacramental action. In the Mystery of the Eucharist we are present to Calvary.

### Symbols of Jesus, symbols of us.

But before the bread and wine are transformed through the prayer of the Mass and become Jesus, they first symbolise us - for, although it is rare that we ourselves will have 'made' them, they are truly work of human hands.

### Work of human hands

We do not bring wheat grain and grapes to the altar, but bread and wine. Wheat and grapes are gift of God, fruit of the harvest. (Though farmers might say they have something to do with it too!) The bread and the wine are those gifts after they have been worked on by human hands.

An this work of human hands, which will become Jesus for us, is first symbolic of us and the work *we* do.

At the Offertory the priest says

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,*
*for through your goodness*
*we have received the bread we offer you:*
*fruit of the earth and work of human hands,*
*it will become for us the bread of life.*

Time was when the bread and wine used at Mass was made by the faithful, rather than bought from some religious supplier. People brought to church loaves of bread and flasks of wine. Bread was commonly baked in a community oven, and was stamped so you could be sure to get your own bread back when it was baked - and the flasks of wine would bear your mark also.

Some of the bread and wine would be used at Mass, and what remained would be distributed to those in need. There was every possibility that at Mass the bread consecrated and in which Jesus gave himself to you, was the very bread you had made and brought to Mass.

The sense of connection between ourselves and the Lord through the Eucharist could hardly be stronger. Fruit of our lives offered to God, taken by Jesus and transformed into himself, gifted to God, gifted to us.

## Made and re-made

St Augustine had further thoughts about how the bread relates to us and us to the bread. He offered a long reflection on many points of comparison between the making of bread and the making of us as Christians.

He wrote at a time when most people were baptised as adults. Augustine himself was born to a Christian mother, but his conversion to Christ came when he was in his 30s. He made a clear and definite decision to change his way of life and to live faithfully as a Christian, and to seek Baptism.

In those days conversion preceded Baptism. Today, when most children born to Catholic Christian families are baptised as infants, personal conversion needs to come later! At their children's Baptism parents and godparents promise to help their children grow into Christian faith. No easy task!

Reflecting on what was normal back in his day, Augustine reflected on how Christians are made and how bread is made, and wrote.

*Having suffered the passion, the Lord gave us*
*his Body and Blood in the Sacrament,*
*so that we should become these things.*
*In fact we are his body*
*and through his mercy we are what we receive.*

*Just think what the element of bread was*
*when it was still in the field:*
*the earth germinated the seed*
*and rain nourished it;*
*then it was taken to the threshing floor,*
*sifted and placed in the granary.*
*Later it was ground and baked*
*and bread was made of it.*

*Think now of yourselves:*
*you didn't exist and you were created;*
*you were placed on the Lord's threshing floor*
*and threshed by the 'oxen',*
*that is by those who told you the good news.*
*As catechumens you were stored in the granary;*
*when you were given your names at baptism*
*you began to be 'ground' by fastings and exorcisms;*
*then finally, you came to the water,*
*you were kneaded and you became one.*
*The fire of the Holy Spirit came upon you and you*
*were baked and became the bread of the Lord.*
*This is what you received.*
*As you see, the bread is one, so you too are one,*
*loving one another, keeping the same faith,*
*the same hope and undivided charity.*

## Being made Christian

St Augustine describes quite some process of change. What might we usefully take from what he says? Perhaps, first of all, encouragement to recognise that Christians are made, not born.

Being baptised as an infant does not guarantee that we *will* be or become Christians. At Baptism we will have received all the gifts God offers us through the Sacrament. And likewise at Confirmation and when we receive Holy Communion. God's generosity is not in question.

However we ourselves need to learn to recognise and to make use of those gifts, and to move into a personal relationship with Christ – accepting his Lordship, and offering ourselves in his service.

The Church speaks of the universal call to holiness. A call is constant through our lives. We are called to be holy. However old, however young.

Of course we will do that in different ways. Being a disciple at 7 or 8, is not the same as being a disciple at 11 or 12, or 30 or 40. But at each age we are invited to be personal relationship with Jesus, to seek his help so we might live our lives as he calls us to.

# *Recipes for the Bread for the World project* *(see page 20)*

## Easy to make Bread

### Ingredients

- 500g strong white flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 7g sachet of fast-action yeast
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 300ml water

### Method

1. Mix 500g strong white flour, 2 tsp salt and a 7g sachet of fast-action yeast in a large bowl.
2. Make a well in the centre, then add 3 tbsp olive oil and 300ml water, and mix well. If the dough seems a little stiff, add another 1—2 tbsp water and mix well.
3. Tip onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for around 10 mins.
4. Once the dough is satin-smooth, place it in a lightly oiled bowl and cover with cling film. Leave to rise for 1 hour until doubled in size or place in the fridge overnight.
5. Line a baking tray with baking parchment. Knock back the dough (punch the air out and pull the dough in on itself) then gently mould the dough into a ball.
6. Place it on the baking parchment to prove for a further hour until doubled in size.
7. Heat oven to 220C/fan 200C/gas 7.
8. Dust the loaf with some extra flour and cut a cross about 6cm long into the top of the loaf with a sharp knife.
9. Bake for 25-30 mins until golden brown and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped underneath. Cool on a wire rack.

*Recipe taken from www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/easy-white-bread*

## Carrot cake cupcakes

### Ingredients

- 175g light muscovado sugar
- 100g wholemeal self-raising flour
- 100g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 1 orange, zested
- 2 eggs
- 150ml sunflower oil
- 200g carrots, grated
- orange coloured sprinkles, to decorate

**For the icing**

- 100g butter, softened
- 300g soft cheese
- 100g icing sugar, sifted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

### Method

1. Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4 and line a 12-hole muffin tin with cases.
2. In a large mixing bowl, mix the sugar, flours, bicarbonate of soda, mixed spice & orange zest.
3. Whisk together the eggs & oil, then stir into the dry ingredients with the grated carrot.
4. Divide the mixture between cases and bake for 20-22 mins until a skewer poked in comes out clean.
5. Cool on a wire rack before icing.

***For the icing***

6. Beat the butter until really soft, then beat in the soft cheese, icing sugar and vanilla.
7. Use a palette or cutlery knife to swirl the icing on top of the cakes, and decorate with sprinkles.

*Recipe taken from www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/carrot-cream-cheese-cupcakes*

## Easy to make Banana cake

### Ingredients

- 3 very ripe medium bananas (around 225g peeled weight)
- 3 large free-range eggs
- 100gsoft light brown sugar
- 150ml sunflower/vegetable oil
- 275g white self-raising flour
- 1 tsp ground mixed spice
- 1 tsp baking powder

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4 and grease and line a 900g/2lb loaf tin with baking parchment or use a loaf tin liner.
2. Peel the bananas and mash with a fork. Tip into a large mixing bowl and add the eggs, sugar and oil. Use a fork or whisk to combine.
3. Add the flour, spice and baking powder and whisk together until thoroughly combined. Pour into the prepared tin. Bake for 40 minutes, or until the cake is well risen and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
4. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack. Serve warm or cold in slices. Spread with butter if you like.

*Recipe taken from www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/easiest_ever_banana_cake_42108*

# Called to be Holy: Communion in holiness

## The communion of saints and the faithful of God

In the Creed we profess our faith in the holy catholic Church, and in 'the communion of saints'.

Typically we think of the saints being those men and women named by the Church as canonised saints - ranging from Sts Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene up to saints of our time such as Sts Oscar Romero, Teresa of Calcutta and Carlo Acutis.

Those preparing for confirmation are strongly encouraged to choose a patron saint, in whose name they are confirmed, as a sign of their spiritual relationship - the candidate looking to the saint for example and encouragement and the saint praying for the candidate.

Those preparing for Holy Communion are also welcome to choose a patron saint and to invoke their prayers during this special year.

## Sponsors

All of those preparing for first sacraments are also invited to choose someone to be a sponsor.

In helping your child(ren) choose a sponsor please choose someone who is Catholic, and practicing their faith — and also someone who lives close enough for the candidates to meet and talk with their sponsor about our faith.

## We are all called to be holy

When he visited England in 2010, Pope Benedict spoke to all the students of all the Catholic schools of England, Wales and Scotland at the same time. Perhaps you remember. He urged the students to be holy...

*There is something I very much want to say to you. I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness.*

*Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?*

*When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.*

*Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin*

*to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. You all know what it is like when you meet someone interesting and attractive, and you want to be that person's friend. You always hope they will find you interesting and attractive, and want to be your friend.*

*God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.*

Having read what Pope Benedict had to say, where do you feel you are on that journey to hoiliness?

- What might help you make progress?
- And what might be holding you back?
- You might like to bring your thoughts to a celebration of the Sacrament of Confession

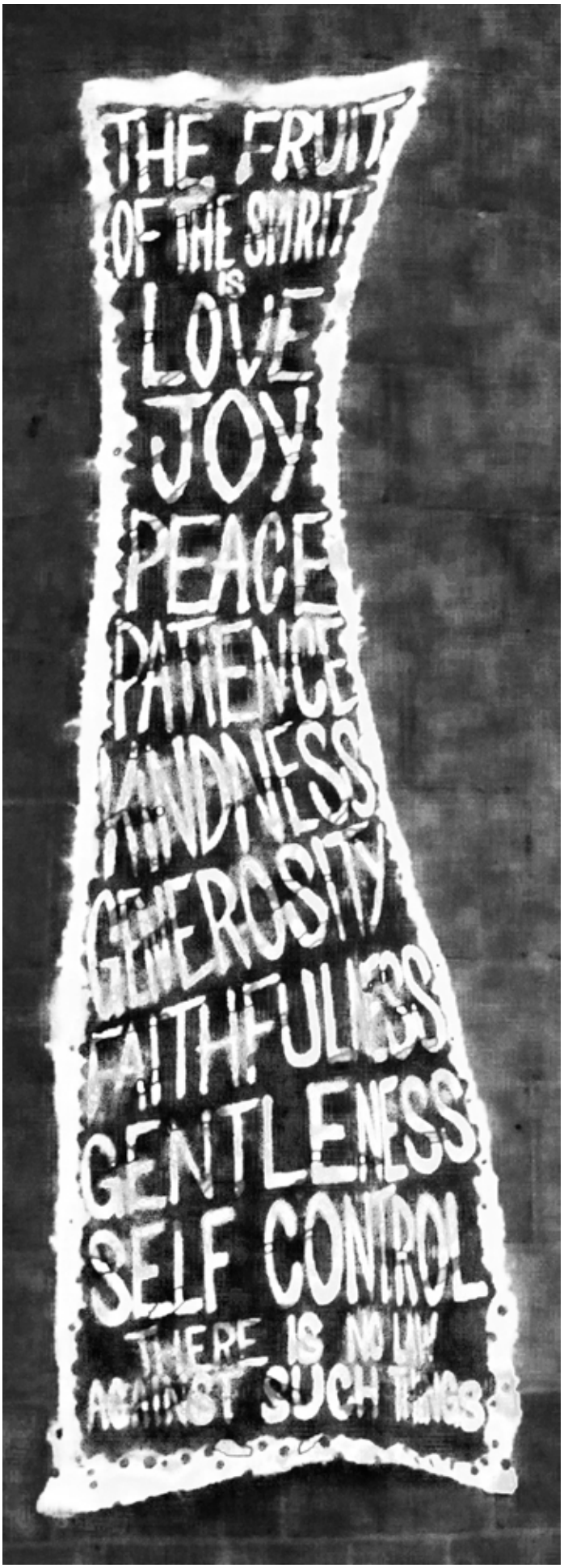
**And...**

What about other members of your family? Or friends?

- What might help them to make progress?
- And what might be holding them back?
- And what might you do to help them?

Why not make a simple shrine to your family's patron saints. It is easy to downloads images of saints from the internet, and often frames can be found at a cheap price.

Use it each week for a simple time of fmaily prayer - for example using the resource offered in the parish in November.



# Communion by, in and with the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is vitally important for us as Christians, and for all that we do as Church.

The Spirit is gifted to the Church in a special way by Jesus, who himself received the Holy Spirit in a particular way at his Baptism. Jesus, anointed in the Spirit, is revealed as the Christ, the Anointed One.

At Baptism we share in that anointing and the ministry that it prepares us for.

*The God of power*
*and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*
*has freed you from sin*
*and brought you to new life*
*through water and the Holy Spirit.*

*He now anoints you*
*with the chrism of salvation,*
*so that united with his people,*
*you may remain for ever a member of Christ*
*who is Priest, Prophet and King.*

We hear from Scripture also

- how Jesus gifts the Holy Spirit to the disciples on the day of Resurrection,
- and how at Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on the gathered Church in a new way

We ourselves first receive the Spirit in our Baptism. And then at Confirmation the Spirit is given to us in a new way.

*Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
*who brought these your servants to new birth*
*by water and the Holy Spirit,*
*freeing them from sin:*
*send upon them, O Lord,*
*the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete;*
*give them the spirit*
*of wisdom and understanding,*
*the spirit of counsel and fortitude,*

*the spirit of knowledge and piety;*
*fill them with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.*
*Through Christ our Lord.*

Of course, we continue to need the help of the Spirit after Confirmation! And we pray for that help too. For example when the Eucharistic Prayer is prayed we invoke the Holy Spirit – twice!

- The first invocation is calling on the Spirit to make holy the bread and wine brought to the altar - to be agent in its change to become Christ for us in Holy Communion
- The second invocation is ask the Holy Spirit to make us holy and one - a Holy Communion with Christ.

In Eucharistic Prayer IV, for example, the priest prays.:

*Therefore, O Lord, we pray:*
*may this same Holy Spirit*
*graciously sanctify these offerings,*
*that they may become*
*the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And then:

*Look, O Lord, upon the Sacrifice*
*which you yourself*
*have provided for your Church,*
*and grant in your loving kindness*
*to all who partake of this one Bread*
*and one Chalice*
*that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit,*
*they may truly become*
*a living sacrifice in Christ*
*to the praise of your glory.*

Another example, taken from the first form of the *Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions*, has the priest pray first:

*Therefore, Father most merciful,*
*we ask that you send forth your Holy Spirit*
*to sanctify these gifts of bread and wine,*
*that they may become for us*
*the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

and then again, pray to the Father:

*Look with favour on the oblation of your Church,*
*in which we show forth*
*the paschal Sacrifice of Christ*
*that has been handed on to us,*
*and grant that, by the power*
*of the Spirit of your love,*
*we may be counted now*
*and until the day of eternity*
*among the members of your Son,*
*in whose Body and Blood we have communion.*

And the priest continues:

*Lord, renew your Church*
*by the light of the Gospel.*
*Strengthen the bond of unity*
*between the faithful*
*and the pastors of your people,*
*together with Francis our Pope,*
*Bernard. our Bishop,*
*and the whole Order of Bishops,*
*that in a world torn by strife*
*your people may shine forth*
*as a prophetic sign of unity and concord.*

In each prayer we pray for the Holy Spirit to come and to change things.

- We pray for the Holy Spirit to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus so we may receive Holy Communion,
- We pray for the Holy Spirit to change us so that we might live in communion, united with Christ, united with each other, as Church.

As we seek to live our lives faithfully; as we take up our various responsibilities - including as parents, spouses, in our homes, in our place of work - it is good to include a prayer to the Holy Spirit amongst our daily prayers, praying for the Spirit's care of ourselves and each other.

Father, pour out your Spirit
upon your people and grant us
a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word
and a new consecration to your service,
that your love may grow among us
and your Kingdom come.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen

God the Holy Spirit,
Comforter and Sanctifier.
Melt our hearts
that we may accept your love.
Renew our minds
that we may know your truth.
Strengthen our will
that we may serve you faithfully.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen,

How do you and your family prepare for Sunday Mass? In addition to your own presonal preparation (for example choosing one things you want say than you to God for; one thing you want to say sorry for, and one thing that you want to ask God to help you with) it is good to talk with others of your family about the the things you and they are praying for - and to make their prayer your prayer too.

Another is to reflect on the Sunday's gospel together - before going to Mass and /or later in the week too. Sharing what we have heard and what we take from it, can help bring up the connection between yourselves and your communion with the Lord.

# Resources for Prayer

There are a variety of resources that can be a great help to you and your family.

### The Bible

Since Advent 2024 the readings at Sunday Mass come from a new translation of the Bible: the anglicised *English Standard Version*.

There are obvious reasons for having a Bible that uses this translation. If buying one, do make sure that you buy the Catholic edition of the ESV. (It has more books in it than the version prepared for Protestant Christians!)

The ESV is published by SPCK and the following link will take you to the various editions they are offering. https://spckpublishing.co.uk/catalogsearch/result/?q=ESV+Catholic

### A guide to Mass — for those who are relatively new to Mass.

Anyone who is just beginning to come to Mass, and anyone who would like a refresher to help them understand the prayers and shape of the Mass - for their own benefit or to support their child. will find help in either *A Beginner's Guide to Praying the Mass* (written for teenagers) or *How we pray the Mass: A Beginner's Guide* (written for children preparing for First Communion.) Although the two books are slightly different their contents is basically the same; and although written for use by children they are written with the expectation that adults also will be using them. Both are available from the parish repository.

### Sunday Missal *(and an on-line alternative)*

To prepare for Sunday Mass, and to continue to draw nourishment from the prayers and readings of the Mass, it is helpful to have a Sunday Missal.

As already noted since Advent 2024 a new translation of the Scriptures is used at Mass.

If you are thinking of buying a Sunday Missal for your child, the recmmended one is the ***Hodder Sunday Missa***l (£19.95), and available from the parish shop.

The *Hodder Sunday Missal* is a hardback volume and contains readings for the full 3-year Sunday cycle of readings. It also includes texts for

- Stations of the Cross (for Lent) and Stations of the Resurrection (for Easter)
- An introduction to praying the Rosary
- A Pentecost Novena (nine days of prayer to the Holy Spirit)
- A simple Morning and Night Prayer to memorise
- A guide to Confession and an examination of conscience
- Traditional prayers to Our Lady
- An introduction to the Sacraments

If you do not have a Sunday Missal you can make use of *Universalis*, an on-line prayer resource. This gives the readings for Mass for eeach day of the year. It can be used on a PC, smart-phones and tablets.

The free version of Universalis gives you access to the readings of the coming Sunday and of the current day. However the paid-for version allows you to access all that it offers for any day of the year (not only the prayers and readings of the Mass, but also the texts for the Daily Prayer of the Church - arrangements of psalms, readings and prayers for prayer through the day, e.g., Morning, Evening and Night), and use it on all your devices.

*Universalis* can be accessed at http://universalis.com/

The pad-for App currently costs £10 for a life long subscription. A free trial for a month is available.

### Prayer Books

A wide range of prayer books are published suitable for use by adults and by children.

Two that are particularly worth mentioning are:

- The CTS *A Simple Prayer Book* which contains very many of the Church's traditional prayers and devotions. It costs £3.95 and is available in the church porch.
- The *YouCat Youth Prayer Book*. Most suitable for children preparing for Confirmation, and something that will be a helpful resource for them throughout their time in Secondary School and beyond. This is most easily available through St Paul's Bookshop (beside St Chad's Cathedral) or from Amazon.

# Service projects

*Those youngsters preparing for the first sacraments are invited to carry out some parish service during this period*

## *Those preparing to receive Holy Communion are asked to volunteer for one of three alternative ministries.*

- Serving at Mass. Training is provided
- Joining the rota to assist with the Sunday Collection
- Joining the rota to tidy the church after Mass.

## *For those preparing for Confirmation are asked to volunteer for one of three alternative ministries.*

- Serving at Mass. Training is provided
- Reading at Mass. Training is provided
- Committing to offer active support to a charity of your choice
- In each case you will be asked - during Lent - to prepare a brief reflection on your experience of this ministry to submit to the bishop, along with your formal request to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

# Parish Timetable 2026/7: Preparing for Holy Communion and for Confirmation

| | Holy Communion | Confirmation |
|---|---|---|
| Enrolment Mass for children<br>– any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am | **July 11/12** | **July 11/12** |
| ***Communion with the Church***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **Sept 12/13** | **Sept 12/13** |
| Parish Social | **Sept 19 at 7.30pm in the Newman Centre** | **Sept 26 at 7.30pm in the Newman Centre** |
| ***Communion through the Scriptures***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **October 17/18** | **October 17/18** |
| ***Communion through Ministry***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **November 14/15** | **November 14/15** |
| Advent Reconciliation Service for parishes of Catholic Sutton Coldfield | **Time and place tbc**<br>**Suitable for HC parents, NOT for HC children** | **Time and place tbc** |
| ***Communion through Eucharist***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am.* | **January 9/10** | **January 9/10** |
| Reconciliation: ***Called by God***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **February 6/ 7** | **Feb 6/ 7** |
| Celebrations of<br>Sacrament of Confession | **First Confessions: Feb 15 to March 12.**<br>*Catholic parents are invited to celebrate the Sacrament on same day as their child* | **Candidates are expected to celebrate the Sacrament during Lent at any of the regular advertised parish/cluster times** |
| Cake sale after Mass<br>– proceeds to CAFOD | **February 27/28** | **February 27/28** |
| ***Communion in holiness***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **February 27/28** | **February 27/28** |
| ***Communion in the Spirit***<br>*Prayer for those preparing – any of Sat 6pm, Sun 9am and Sun 11am* | **March 13/14** | **March 13/14** |
| Session *with the children*<br>to prepare the Masses at which<br>they will receive the Sacraments | **20th March 10am to 12noon**<br>**Meeting in the Small Hall of the Newman Centre** | **21st March 3 to 5pm**<br>**Meeting in the Small Hall of the Newman Centre** |
| **March 25-28 The Easter Triduum. (The high point of the Church's Year)**<br>**All those preparing for Communion and Confirmation are particularly encouraged to attend the services of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night** | | |
| Rehearsals for the Sacraments | **During week commencing 11th April** | **After the 6pm Mass on the Saturday before the Confirmation** |
| Celebrations of First Sacraments | **1st Communion Masses April 17/18; April 24/25; May 1/2** | **Confirmation Mass:**<br>**7pm, Friday 14th May**<br>*(NB seating restricted to 1 seat each for candidate, sponsor & 3 family members)* |
| **May 30 Corpus Christi: 11am Mass**<br>**Children who have received communion for first time will be invited to lead the procession; those newly confirmed who have joined our parish ministers teams as part of their preparation will be invited to take an active role in ministering the Liturgy. Followed by Parish BBQ** | | |