

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome to this year's First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion Programme.

Although the Catechists are responsible for driving the content of the programme, the real teachers are you, the parents or caregivers of the children taking part. The messages you give to your child, either directly or indirectly through your actions, have a far greater impact on how your son or daughter comes to understand God, than this programme can ever achieve. In this spirit, we extend a warm welcome to you as fellow educators in this journey to your child's First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

### The Programme

Each session runs for about 1-1¼ hours on a Saturday afternoon, followed by a Special Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

At the start of each session, the children will be given a booklet to work through. Parents and Caregivers will also receive a more detailed booklet that will support you in working through the material with the child. Catechists and helpers will be available during the session to give help if needed.

We will have one session at Ladywell Convent. This session focuses on the practicalities of the Reconciliation Service, giving the children a chance to practise before the actual service itself, where you and your family will then join us.

There will also be one session at St Edmund's Church, followed by a mass.

### Who is involved in the Programme?

Lead Catechist – Mark Chare  
Administrator – Anne Hodgson  
Mass Co-ordinator – TBC

We also have Catechists and Parent Helpers.

## Catechists

The Catechists and Parent Helpers, led by a Lead Catechist, have a number of responsibilities:

- Educating the children in the principles of the Catholic faith. Our focus is very much on basic underlying beliefs, not rules and regulations!
- Enthusing the children about the exciting step they are about to take. Mass can be a very dull and drab affair in comparison to a computer game, playing football, or having an extra sleep in, in the morning to an 8 year old. By explaining the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion in child-relevant ways and by bringing fun and joy to the sessions, we aim to foster the children's enthusiasm and commitment to the sacraments. Our aim is to help the children retain this commitment, when the parties and presents of First Holy Communion day are gone, on into their adult lives.
- Preparing them for the practicalities of receiving the sacraments. In addition to understanding the importance of the sacraments they are about to undertake, the children also need to know what they have to do on the day. The services for both First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion can be quite daunting. This is why we have included time to rehearse both sacraments.

## Parents or Caregivers - that's you!

You have a significant part to play in the programme.

- Keeping it simple! The messages of our faith are simple even if they are sometimes dressed in elaborate language. Your role is to help the children learn the important stuff – it's quality that matters, not quantity!
- The purpose of the parent/caregiver led programme is to help you, help your child prepare for the sacraments. By giving you the opportunity to reflect on your faith and its place in your life, we hope that you will be able to talk freely with your child about your beliefs and answer their

questions. These days, there's not much space given to talk about faith. Sometimes, it feels embarrassing to do so. Please remember that everyone is there for the same reason – to support his or her child. So do join in.

- We do ask you to take your child to Mass regularly. The Mass is a perfect guide. All the children need to know is contained within it. We also encourage you to use the Simple Mass book we give you, with your child so that they start to say the responses and read the prayers with the rest of the congregation. This helps them feel involved.
- After each Saturday session, a special Mass is held at St Joseph's church in Milford (10.15am Sunday) or at St Edmund's church in Godalming (6pm Saturday). The children really enjoy the opportunity of reading and taking up the offertory, so please attend. These occasions are also a great way of involving the parish in the progress of the children.

### Programme Dates

The programme dates are included with this letter. Please put these dates in your diary now!

The first date we will meet is Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September, with a prompt start time of 3.00pm.

### Commitment

We expect every child and at least one parent or caregiver to attend every session. Children cannot be left on their own at the session, as they require an adult to help them complete their booklet.

By attending each session we are showing our children how important this programme is to us and how much we value it.

We understand that there are times and circumstances when you cannot attend such as illness, but not because of football practice, or swimming gala. There will be no other time to catch up on the session you miss. If you are unable to attend please let us know.

If you miss more than **2 sessions** you will not be able to complete the course this year and will have to do the next one.

### Behaviour

We will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour from your children or yourselves. If poor behaviour continues, you and your child may be asked to leave the Programme, as it will disrupt other children's learning.

Please remember that we are all volunteers running this programme, who have given up our time to prepare and run this programme.

We are delighted to welcome you to the programme and very much look forward to working with you and your child over the coming months.

May God bless you in the challenging and exciting role of parenthood and guide you as you prepare your child for such an important step in life.

Any queries please email [communionatsteds@gmail.com](mailto:communionatsteds@gmail.com)

The Programme Team