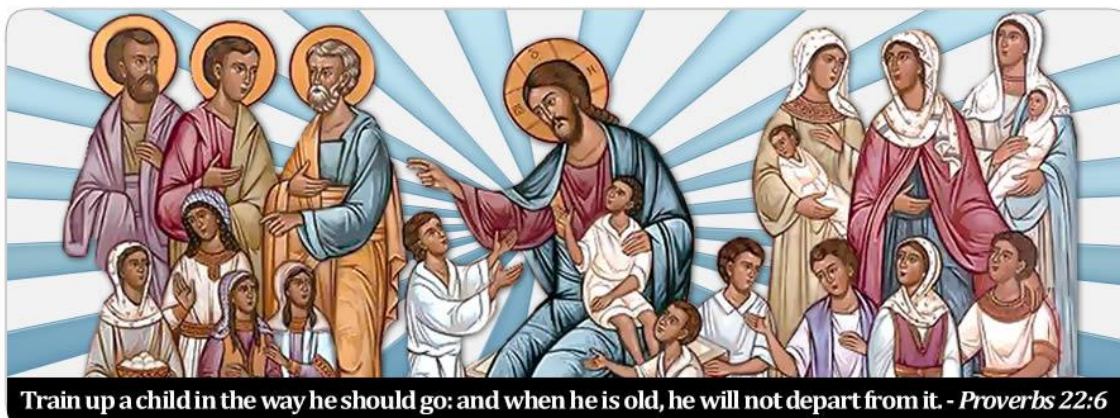


FIRST CONFESSION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION  
Parents Registration Session



I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME;

### Introduction.

As a parent, you give your child countless good gifts: your love, your time, a home, a family, an education, food, clothing security, comfort and daily experiences of joy. The first, greatest of these gifts is your love.

Through your love for your child- through the sacrifices you make, the affection you show, and the discipline you enforce- you teach him what it means to be a human person, that we are called to live in relation with others, to give our lives away in love for others, and to use our minds and hearts to serve others.

The most loving gift you can give your child is your faith and trust in God.

What is it that you teach your child about God? What is the faith you pass on?

**“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”**

### The Good News- Jesus Christ

1. **God loves us all, each one individually. He has plan for your life.** - God the Father loves you and seeks you. And that ache in your heart, that longing, that yearning, and that “never satisfied” quality in your desires all point to God and he has written his name in your heart. He wants to turn you away from a passing and unsatisfying world, towards him. He wants to save you and prepare you to live with him for all eternity. He wants to fill the God sized hole in your heart and its infinite longing with his infinite Love.
2. **But we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. Sin enslaves you and will destroy you.** - Nothing is so destructive in your life and this world as sin, it separates us from God.. Sin entered the world through our first parents, Adam and Eve. We are born with Original Sin, and one of its effects is concupiscence, the leaning toward sin. It is desire gone wrong. Satan is lying to you and saying that God does not love you, that rebellion from God will bring happiness to you. It will not. Sin and indulgence

## FIRST CONFESSION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

does not ultimately satisfy. Sin does not ultimately bring happiness, it brings bondage, addiction, dissatisfaction, and ultimately resentment and spiritual death. God created us to love him and to love the other, to put God first, to be prepared to self-sacrifice and lay down our lives for the good of the other.

3. **Christ Jesus died for each one of us, to save you.** - You cannot save yourself from the bondage, the enslavement to sin. Into this mess of our wayward desires and our foolish grasping at worldly goods and pleasure Jesus came. He met the woman at the well (who is us) and told her that everyone who drinks from this well (the world) will be thirsty again. In other words, the world cannot ultimately satisfy or save us. We cannot save ourselves from sin- only Jesus can do that for us. We must die to this world and rise to God. But our way to God was cut off by sin. Jesus came and reopened the way to the Father by dying to this world, to its lies and false claims. Rising and ascending he has re-opened the way to the Father, our hearts true desire. He died so that we can be saved by being led back to the Father and may have eternal life. By his death, our sins are forgiven. And dying to this world, we can one day fully be satisfied by God.
4. **But this demands a response from us -Repent and believe the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.** - To repent means to come to a new mind, to come to understand and accept all that has been stated: that the Lord loves me, is calling me in my desires, and want to save me from the sinful drives that will destroy me. It is time for me to come to believe in this love God has for me and accept the promise and salvation of his love: Jesus Christ and the saving truth he proclaims. It is time to commit my life to Christ Jesus, to trust in Him and become his follower, an intentional disciple.
5. **Be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit.** - And thus in Baptism our sins are washed away, we are incorporated into Christ, we each become a member of his Body. But this is just the beginning. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit, the life, love, serenity, joy and wisdom of God comes to dwell in me and begins a work of transforming me, through the grace of the Sacraments, the Holy Mass, listening to his Word, obeying his commandments, recognising his love. At Baptism we receive the seed of faith, which must be accepted, and nourished in order that we grow into mature Christians, disciples, followers, friends of Christ Jesus. But for many who have been baptised the seed of faith has remained dormant. They have never formed a personal relationship with Christ Jesus and experienced his friendship, recognising his love for them, and become his intentional disciple. Our first step is the acknowledgement that we are sinners and in desperate need of salvation.
6. **Abide in Christ and his body the Church.** - Grow in this relationship with Jesus and his Father in the Holy Spirit by living in the life of the Church, which is Jesus presence and Body in this world. Abide there, that is go on dwelling there. To grow in relationship requires spending time with the Lord, he is continually seeking us, we will find Him if we respond to his call.
7. **Go make disciples.** - And so the cycle repeats with the newly evangelised, and more deeply rooted Christian calling others to this conversion. Parents are evangelisers, they are called to make disciples of their children, to bring them into friendship, relationship with Jesus Christ.

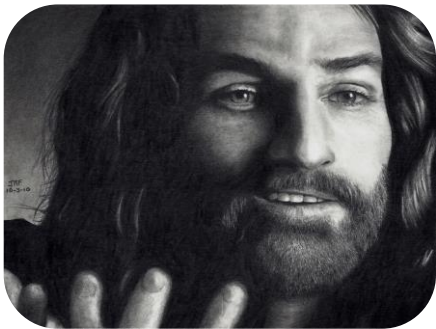


FIRST CONFESSION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

**Friendship with Jesus- the Call to becoming His disciples**

**WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?**

Do you know the differences between a disciple and a believer? You may think that those terms are synonymous. However, they are not, Jesus made that perfectly clear. Every disciple is a believer. However, not every believer is a disciple. Even Satan is a believer!! It is too simplistic to think that a disciple is just a more serious version of a believer. The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word for "student" or "learner." **someone who follows, someone who is going places.** Discipleship is a gift. "You did not choose me, but I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." To be Jesus' disciple, to enter into His kingdom, requires a **DECISIVE CHOICE.** It involves a turning away from sin and a turning towards God.



'Repent and believe.' Being a 21st-century disciple means following Jesus into friendship, having a personal relationship with Him. Our faith is all about discipleship.

Jesus desires that each one of us enters into a life of friendship with him and that we in turn introduce our children into this loving divine relationship. The sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion are essential in this growing relationship.

God, through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ offers us the ultimate gift, friendship with Him which is something unheard of in the other religions of the world. Our Catholic Christian faith, our religion is not just a mere external formality, but it is an intimate and personal relationship with God. The Church teaches that friendship with Jesus is the highest form of friendship and that those who die in friendship with God can be assured of salvation, eternal life with the Holy Trinity (CCC 142, 1030). There are no substitutes for friendship with Jesus and no human friendship is complete without Christ. Jesus longs for friendship with us- Jesus comes to each one of us so that the Truth can be known, to free us from sin so that we might have access to God Jesus seeks in his earthly life sought friends, calling the Twelve and tirelessly travelling to meet and build friendships. Jesus offers, but does not force, friendship - Jesus specifically calls the Twelve and they respond. Others followed Jesus including many women but some do not wish to build friendship with Jesus and reject him e.g. the rich young man (Mark 10:31).

Jesus builds friendships with all sorts of personalities: Passionate and impulsive (Peter), aggressive and ambitious (James and John), a zealot (Simon the Zealot), a calculating tax collector (Matthew), courageous and questioning (Thomas), cunning/sly (Nathaniel/Bartholomew), corrupt (Judas), loyal but confused (Philip), unassuming (James the younger), active (Martha) and spiritual (Mary, Martha's sister). He builds friendships with people from all occupations (fishermen, tax collectors), religious affiliations (Nicodemus/Pharisee), levels of wealth (Peter and Joseph of Arimathea) prostitutes and former demoniacs (Mary Magdalene).

He calls his disciples, his followers, friends (John 15:15) and brothers (Matt 12:49), sharing everything He has heard from his Father (John 15:15).

He serves his friends - Jesus responds to the needs of his close friends: healing Peter's mother in law (Luke 4:38-29) raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44). Jesus saves the disciples in the storm (Matt 14:22-33), defends them from the Pharisees (Matt 12: 1-8), washes their feet (John 13:5) and protects them when He is arrested at Gethsemane (John 18:8).

Jesus makes it clear what is necessary for Divine Friendship - **"You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14) and "do the will of My Father" (Matt 12:50).**

Finally Jesus offers his life for his friends - **"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).**



FIRST CONFESSION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION  
**Your Child's First and Greatest Teacher.**

Accordingly because you are your child's first teacher in love, there is no one better equipped than you to be his first and primary teacher in the Faith, to bring him into relationship with Jesus Christ and pass on all he has taught. More than any school, teacher, priest or catechist you are uniquely suited to handing on to your child the most important lessons he needs to learn: who he is, why he was made, how he is to live, for what he is eternally destined. That he was made because he is loved by God and his destiny is for joy, a joy and happiness that can only be found with God.

The Catholic Church in her documents has emphasised again and again this role of parents, that they are the primary educators of their children, the ones who bear the greatest responsibility in the moral, spiritual and intellectual formation of their children. God does not oblige parents to catechise another's children, neither does he obligate another parent to catechise your children, rather He asks this of you.

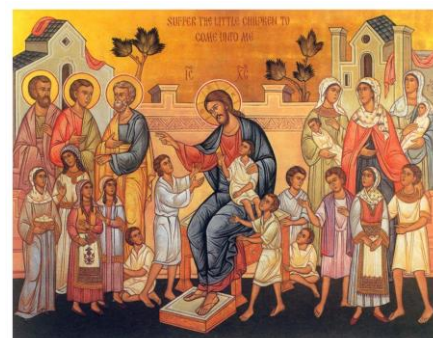
Ever since your child was born and baptised into the faith, you have been carrying out this duty in countless of ways. From teaching him to share with others, to taking him to Mass on Sundays, you have been forming his heart and mind in accordance with truth.

When you send your child to Catholic school or enrol him on the First Confession and First Holy Communion programme it might seem as if your role in his moral and spiritual formation has been supplanted, at least in part, by his teachers and catechist- nothing however is further from the truth. **In order for your child truly to know and love Jesus, and his teachings through our Catholic faith, in order for him to become a good kind virtuous adult he needs you to guide and lead him.**

**Sacraments – Sacred Encounters with Jesus Christ.**

To request the sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion is to ask to enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacraments belong to HIM. The Church is the guardian of the sacraments, precious gifts from God.

All sacraments are encounters with Jesus and therefore sacred, holy, great gifts of his love, not to be treated casually or flippantly. Too often, the sacraments are seen as a mere external human ritual in which we participate. They may be inspiring and uplifting, but some never go beyond the externals. The sacraments are not meant to be only external signs and celebrations, they are also meant to be transforming internal realities in which we personally encounter the living God! The proper attitude to have is one of recognising a personal union with God, a heart to heart encounter and one in which we can be deeply changed, transformed. If we fail to realise this, the sacrament is still valid; however, we will not allow God to change us. It would be as if God showed up, spoke to us, invited us to let Him change our life, and we simply ignored Him. Our lack of personal participation does not change the fact that God showed up, but it does eliminate the possibility of receiving Him into our soul. Each sacrament offers the grace for a particular need, but the Eucharist is the summit of the Sacraments, and therefore Sunday Mass attendance each week is crucial for our spiritual well- being and that of the children.



In this special year for the children, the catechesis in the parish, the guidelines, and expectations for parents and children will be rooted in this understanding of friendship with Jesus and the sacred, holy, loving encounter with Him in the sacraments, which the children will celebrate for the first time this year. The children will be encouraged to respond with joy to this great gift of divine friendship and at the same time develop an attitude of due reverence, and gratitude to the, all loving and merciful God.

## FIRST CONFESSION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

Children wishing to begin the preparation process for First Confession and First Holy Communion must meet the following criteria in order to participate:

- Be baptised and already practising the Catholic faith at a level appropriate to their age
- Be registered parishioners at Our Lady and St Michael's Catholic Church
- Are attending Holy Mass with their parents every Sunday
- Have a desire to enter into the process.
- Parents full completion of Online Application Forms and documentation by the Registration Session.
- Completion of pre-catechesis materials 'God's Covenant with You', at home, prior to the beginning of the 'Jesus Our Life' Programme in October.

### Preparation will include:

- 40 hours of formation for the reception of the sacraments at home (approximately 1 hour per week).
- Spending time praying and reading the holy scriptures DAILY with your child.
- Mandatory Parish Catechesis Workshop Sessions for Children
- Mandatory Parish Sessions for Parents
- Periodic liturgical ritual celebrations within the Sunday Mass at the 12noon Sunday Mass after the Parish Catechesis Sessions.
- Completion of the parish First Confession and First Holy Communion Preparation Materials at home. (Jesus Our Life text and activities book).
- Celebrate the Sacrament of First Confession prior to beginning preparation for First Holy Communion.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

"Parents and the parish catechetical leader or catechist, together with the priest, are responsible for determining when children have attained the age of reason and are ready to receive First Communion. Because reception of Eucharist, especially for the first time, is integral to the child's full incorporation into the ecclesial community, the priest has a responsibility in determining every child's readiness to receive First Communion. Parents also have the right and the duty to be involved in preparing their children for First Communion. The catechesis offered should help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to catechise their children more effectively." (NDC 36.A.3a.)

### Because parents: -

- Are the primary educators of their children in the faith.
- Are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life.
- Serve as models for their child by being committed Catholic Christians.

### Parents are expected to-

- Actively live and witness the faith
- Worship with your child/children at Sunday Mass every week and on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Nurture your child's spiritual growth by praying together and reading the Holy Scriptures every day.
- Pledge to spend 40 hours in formation.
- Be actively involved in the catechetical formation of the child through the use of the Jesus Our Life programme.
- Support, encourage and ensure completion of assignments, activities and expectations.