

Why should my family join GIFT?

Like any relationship, the one with Jesus and his Church needs nurturing so that we can fully experience the abundant life that Christ promised us (Jn 10:10) when we were baptised and in our turn, invite others to experience the same. This is what GIFT is all about. Helping your family truly experience God's love. Being a family catechesis, it is structured around the needs of families. It requires commitment, but it is flexible, and can accommodate the somewhat chaotic experience of our everyday lives.

Please register your family for GIFT via the parish office, letting us know your family's names and the ages of your children. Once registered we will send out a monthly email updating you about the times and dates of sessions.

A Prayer for my Family

Lord Jesus, be with my family. Grant us your peace and harmony, an end to any conflicts among us.

Gift us with compassion to better understand each other, to love each other, and be there for one another.

Through the intercession of your mother Mary and St Joseph, may our family may become a holy family rooted and flourishing in your love.

Make us selflessly dedicated to one another and to you and a light of hope for all around us, Amen.



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Growing in Faith Together (GIFT)



For families with children aged between 5 and 12, whether you are already engaged with your faith or you're seeking the sacraments for your child but not yet as engaged as you would like to be. It is here to help you as a family to grow in faith together with others on the same journey.

"Family catechesis is of great assistance as an effective method in training young parents to be aware of their mission as evangelisers of their own family." (Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, 287)

Family Catechesis at St John's & B1.Sacrament parishes

Why a 'family' catechesis?

In the Rite of Baptism for a child the priest asks the parents, saying: "In [baptising your child], you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?" The parents answer confidently: "We do." Most times, though, this remains little more than signing a 'terms and conditions' clause; but it is a big responsibility, and one necessary for the power of baptism to be released in the child's life. We want to help you fulfil this promise. Parents are the ones who have the most influence on whether their children continue to practice their Catholic faith as they reach adulthood (or while they are still children!). Family catechesis seeks to address the problem of teaching children without, or separately from their parents. It assists parents in their role rather than taking over from them.

How will GIFT work?

GIFT provides a place for you to learn what engaging with your faith in the context of your family actually looks like, and encouragement then to do it! We offer monthly Family sessions - on Saturday mornings - to which you will be invited. We gather, pray, and engage in activities and conversations that help us reflect on what faith means to each of us; children, parents, catechists and clergy.

Parents will also have a separate session on a weekday evening each month via Zoom to grow in their own understanding of the faith and to help pass this on to your children. For many adults, catechesis ended when they finished Confirmation. They can lack confidence and be intimidated by what passing on the faith entails. GIFT provides the help needed to better understand and to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ. We can't pass on what we don't have! And all families are different. We know that many parents are not both Catholic and this too can be challenging. The Church is here to help.

When can we apply for our child's First Communion classes?

Discerning when your child is ready to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist is an important factor in their, (and your) journey of faith. The Church also has a role in discerning readiness. Receiving the sacraments **is not a rite of passage**. It is not about **reaching a certain age** but about recognising your child's, and your family's understanding of what it is to be part of the Church family. It requires a willingness to participate fully in the Church's life.

GIFT will help with this period of discernment, before a child is put forward to receive the sacraments for the first time. When we together decide that your child is ready to receive the sacraments we will offer materials specifically designed to prepare them, supported by one of our Catechist Mentors.

Not everyone will be ready at the same time. This will mean celebrating the reception of the sacraments at different times throughout the year. For instance, there will no longer be only one day when everyone comes forward at the same time to receive holy communion for the first time. Hopefully small groups of children will be ready together so that they can share the celebration with one another, their families and the parish community.

What about Sunday Mass?

Participating in Mass on Sunday is a key part of living our faith, alongside time at home when you pray together as a family, and other parish activities that you take part in. The Church says the Sunday Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of our faith - the place where we find our life and identity as Christians. Preparing for First Communion understands that this is going to be a regular practice, it is not meant to be Last Communion! These things show your willingness to be full members of the community and a desire for your faith to grow.