

## Heart Speaks to Heart: The Gift of Holy Communion

### *Exploring Holy Communion Together*

#### **What is Holy Communion?**

Holy Communion is the Sacrament in which Jesus gives Himself to us. In Holy Communion we receive His very Body and Blood. Receiving Communion is the most intimate way in which we can unite ourselves to Jesus, who offered His life for us on the cross.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is also known as:

- **The Eucharist:** a word which means 'thanksgiving' and describes the thanks which we offer to God in Holy Communion
- **The Lord's Supper:** a term sometimes used to highlight the fact that Christ celebrated Communion at His Last Supper, before His death on the cross
- **The Mass:** a term which derives from a word meaning 'to send' and describes our 'sending out' to do God's work once we have received spiritual strength from Communion



### *PREPARATION FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION*

Our children who are preparing for First Holy Communion are on a journey with Jesus as friend and guide. In the Diocese of Leeds we have developed a resource to help them on that journey. The resource is called *Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Holy Communion*.

An important part of this First Holy Communion resource is for children and parents and carers to take time to learn together and to talk to each other: there will be suggested questions to answer, activities to do and topics to discuss. It's also very important to be praying together as a family at home.

## *BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION*

Parents and carers will:

- Have filled in an enrolment form (catechists will help you further with this)
- Have attended a meeting or been contacted in some other way to be given introductory information about the preparation programme
- Been given the book *Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Holy Communion*
- Been given a string bag in which each child can collect their 'treasures' which will help them to prepare for First Holy Communion; this string bag will be the child's 'Backpack'
- Have acquired a notebook to give to their child; this book will become the child's 'Reflection Book'; catechists should be able to give ideas about these books and where they can be purchased at a reasonable price
- Have planned to set up a 'Prayer Place' at home, where their child can pray; this may simply be a bedside table covered in a cloth, with a crucifix and prayer cards and other religious objects (like rosary beads) on it; again, catechists should be able to give more advice about this

Parents and carers should give their child the book (*Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Holy Communion*) and read the introductory pages with their child, who should:

- Fill in the information required on page 3 (their name and the date on which they have been given the book)
- Read:
  - Pages 6-7; at this point, parents and carers could give the child the string bag (the 'Backpack'), the notebook which they have acquired (the 'Reflection Book') and talk about where the child's 'Prayer Place' could be
  - Pages 8-9, which introduce the characters of Grandpa and his twin grandchildren; then read pages 12-13 and think about answers to the questions at the end of page 13

## Heart Speaks to Heart: The Gift of Holy Communion

Let's have a look at the children's First Holy Communion book in detail.

There are seven sessions in the book. Each session follows a similar format.

### 1. **A family story**

Using conversation between an imaginary grandfather and his twin grandchildren (Jess and Ryan), the children are prompted to share what they have been doing to prepare for First Holy Communion since the last session.

### 2. **A virtue**

The practice of virtues (like love and courage and gratitude) helps us all to flourish – to grow in friendship with Jesus and become like Him and so become the best person we can be. For each session, one or two virtues have been chosen for us to think about and to try to practise in our lives.

### 3. **'Bible Journaling'**

Stories from the Bible have been retold in the First Holy Communion book. During each session, a story will be read out loud. The children will be invited to underline words in the story which stand out for them and to think about what the story means. They will then be asked to write and draw their thoughts in the margins beside the story in their books and to colour in their designs later.

## **What is the Bible?**

*The Bible is a collection of writings and is sometimes called 'Sacred Scripture'. The Bible shows us what God is like and helps us to know God more intimately and to journey with Him more closely. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament (which tells the story of God's chosen people) and the New Testament (which tells the story of Jesus, the Saviour who was born among God's chosen people, suffered and died for us and rose from the dead to lead us deeper into the everlasting life and love of God); the New Testament continues after the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus with the story of the followers of Jesus who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, spread the message about Him.*

### 4. **Discussion and activities**

During each session, there will be an opportunity to talk together about the topic of the session and to complete activities.

### 5. **Treasure Hunts**

For each session (except session 6) a treasure hunt has been devised. When possible, you will be invited to explore your local church with your child and discover many of the 'treasures' which can be found there. If you are not able to access the local church, Treasure Hunt sheets for each session are available online to download. Your child may be able to fill in the boxes on the sheets by Googling the words and writing or drawing in the spaces provided. A glossary is also available online to download and this provides basic definitions of Treasure Hunt words.

## 6. Things to do before the next time you meet

At the end of each session, several activities will be suggested for the children to do before the next session.

## 7. Concluding prayer time

There will always be an opportunity at the end of each session for quiet meditation (called Quiet Prayer in the book): sit quietly and listen to your breathing; a short phrase (e.g. 'Come, Lord Jesus') is repeated a few times; you reflect on these words during a short period of silence.

## What is Prayer?

Prayer is turning the mind and heart towards God. When people pray, they enter into a living relationship with God. Prayer is very important for everyone taking part in our First Holy Communion programme.

- Friendship grows and deepens through spending time together: prayer is the way we spend time in friendship with God.
- Prayer is a two-way process: when we pray, we are spending time with God, talking with Him and listening to Him, and He listens to us.
- Prayer comes in lots of different forms: we talk to God; we thank Him; we ask Him for things; we say sorry for things we have said and done.

There will usually be a rehearsal before the celebration of First Holy Communion. Catechists will give more information about this.

**Online** you will find links to download:

- A **card** called ***How to Receive Holy Communion*** which guides the children through what to do to receive Holy Communion
- A **Book of Holy Communion Prayers**
- **Treasure Hunt sheets** for the children to write on or draw the 'treasures' which they discover in church
- A **Glossary** of difficult words used in *Heart Speaks to Heart*
- **Stickers** to mark when the children complete each session

We do hope that you enjoy this special journey, a journey which will end in our children celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion. May the Lord bless you as you make this journey together.

## Important Note for Parents and Carers

- If your child has any special educational needs or disabilities, it is important that you speak personally to a lead catechist and/or the Parish Priest.
- If you have *any* concerns about being involved in this preparation programme, please speak to a catechist and/or the Parish Priest.