

Going into Church

The Sign of the Cross



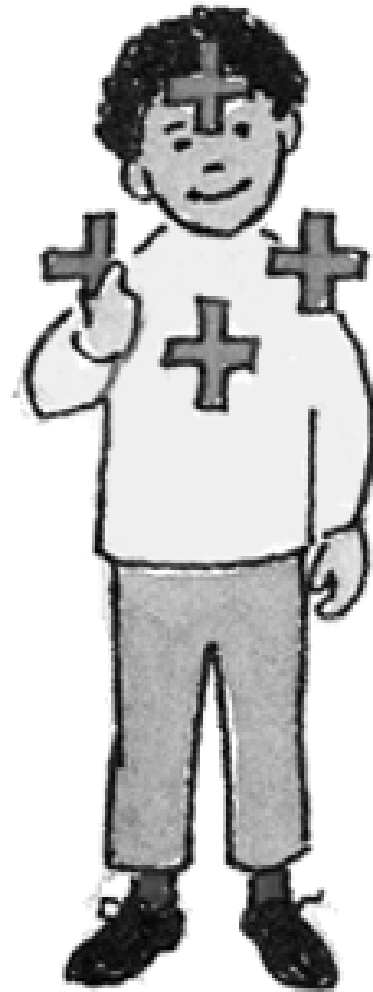
As we come into church we bless ourselves with holy water from the stoup as a reminder of our baptism and to show that we are a follower of Jesus who died on the cross for us. It joins us with everyone else in church as members together.

Practise making the Sign of the Cross properly at

home using the words to remind us of our belief in the Trinity, three Persons in one God:

***"In the Name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen"***

We put our right hand on our forehead to mean that we try to learn about God; on our heart to show that we try to love God; on our shoulders to ask for God's protection and guidance in our life.



Welcome

We are greeted by someone in the community of the church as a sign that Jesus welcomes us and we are welcome as part of God's family as well as our own. When we gather together Jesus is with us as he always is. He told us: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them".

Perhaps you can talk together as a family about what kind of welcome you give to people and how you like to be welcomed.



- *Do we invite people into our home?*
- *Who are they? Are they our friends and family?*
- *How do we welcome people into our home?*
- *What do we do to make them feel welcome into our family?*
- *Do we include them and involve them in what we are doing?*
- *Do we sit with them and talk to them and listen to them or do we ignore them?*
- *Do we give them something to eat and drink?*

Can you link some of your ideas with how you are welcomed at church and how you might put these into practice yourselves at church and help to welcome others, too?

The first part of Mass

On the Sanctuary



The priest kisses the altar to show that it is a special place and because it is where Jesus will become present in the form of bread and wine later on during Mass.

It might be good to think about how you treat special people and places in your life to help your children understand the respect and reverence we have for what is in church.

- *Who do we kiss? Why do we kiss some people and not others? What are we really saying when we give someone a kiss?*
- *Do we have somewhere that is special to us? A corner in our bedroom; a place where we like to curl up and read; or a favourite chair where we can snuggle up and watch TV; or is it a part of the garden that we like to go to at certain times?*
- *What is it that makes those places so special to us?*
- *Who or what does it make us think of?*

Can you link some of your ideas about special people and places with the priest kissing the altar and the Book of the Gospels? Encourage your child/children to watch out for the priest doing these actions.

The Greeting

Several times during Mass the priest says to us all:

"The Lord be with you"

and we answer:

"And with your spirit".



We use that word '**spirit**' to mean the whole of us; not just our bodies, but everything that makes us the special person we are; what we are like; how we are the unique person that God has made us to be.

Perhaps you can talk to your child/children about when they were a baby and wondering what they would be like as they grew up. It is not just about how we look or what we think, but about what kind of person we are and become. We keep on changing and growing as a person all our lives.

- *How am I special? What kind of person am I?*
- *Do I know who I am?*
- *I will spend all my life finding out who I really am inside.*
- *That can be a very exciting journey!*

The Penitential Act

At this moment of the Mass we are thinking about all the good things Jesus did for us, but we have not always acted in the way God wants for us and so, knowing how much God loves and forgives us, we tell God and each other that we are sorry,

As a family, listen told, describing Good Shepherd, sheep and looking was lost.



to the story Jesus himself as the caring for his for the one that

"There was once such amazing things wonderful things followed him. One asked him who he the Good Shepherd. sheep by name and

show them the way to the good grass. I show them the way to the cool, clear, fresh water. When there are places of danger, I show them how to go through safely. If one of the sheep is missing I would go anywhere to look for the lost sheep. When the lost sheep is found, I would put it on my shoulders, even if it is heavy, and carry it back safely to the sheepfold'."

someone who said and did such that people day, when they was, he said: 'I am I know each of my they follow me. I

Encourage your child/children to talk of what they noticed about the shepherd in the story; how he guided the sheep safely and looked after them and how he rescued the one that got itself into difficulties.

Sometimes we find it hard to follow Jesus without making a mess of things, but we can be sure that he will always be there for us and find us, even if we lose the way.

The Gloria

We say or sometimes sing the Gloria to give praise to God for all that he is and all he has done for us.

Who do we praise in life? Who deserves to be praised?

Do we like being praised ourselves?

What sort of things do we think are deserving of praise?

Some of the words we have been saying in the past have now been changed in the new translation.

Practise saying this prayer of praise together as a family using the new words. Perhaps each line or phrase spoken by one or both parents could be repeated by the children.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.



Which lines do you like?

Can you think of something special in your life for which you would like to praise God?

Does this help you to pray with more meaning?

The Liturgy of the Word

After the priest has prayed the **Collect**, which means that he collects all the prayers we have prayed quietly in our hearts and sums them up in the Church's prayer to God our Father, we sit down to **listen** to the Readings of the Mass.



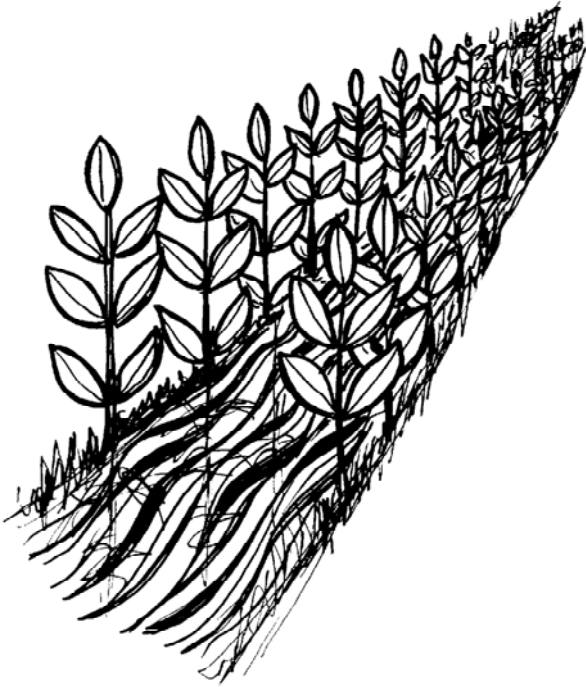
On a Sunday there are three Readings and a Psalm. That's a lot for us to hear and to have to pay attention all the time! But we believe that it is God who is speaking to us; that he is present in his Word as it is proclaimed and so we do try to take a message from the readings to help us to live out our lives in a better way, more like the way Jesus lived and wants us to try and live.

Jesus told us another parable to show us how important it is to listen to the Word of God and to take it to heart. It is called the **Parable of the Sower**.

Listen carefully to the story, as a family, while it is read and then talk about it together.

"Jesus said: Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow seeds. As he sowed, some fell on the edge of the path and the birds of the air came and ate them up. Others fell on rocky ground, but when the seeds tried to put their little roots down among the stones they could not push their way into the ground. When the sun came out it scorched the seeds and they died. Some seeds fell among thorns, but as the seeds pushed their little roots down part of the way in, the thorns choked them and they died too. Some of the seeds fell into good, rich soil, so when they pushed their little roots into the soil they went all the way down and grew and grew until they were ripe for harvest and what a great harvest they produced! Listen anyone who has ears to hear!"





After the story, perhaps you can ask some questions like:

- *What do you think the story is about?*
- *Who could the sower be?*
- *What might the seed be?*
- *What do you think the birds could be?*
- *What could the rocky ground and stones be?*
- *Any ideas about what the thorns might be?*
- *Where is the good, rich soil?*

It is important to value the ideas your child may have. Some possible suggestions might be that the seed is the Word of God which can fall on deaf ears! The worries and concerns of life can distract us from hearing God's Word and sometimes we can lose our initial enthusiasm and turn away from God. When we try to live our life as God wants we can grow closer to God and to one another through our good deeds and acts of kindness.

Can you see the link that Jesus is making here about the Word of God with this part of the Mass for us?



When we listen to the Word of God in Church it is as though Jesus is saying to us, as he said in the story of the sower:

"Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!"

We then need to listen very carefully to try to understand, with the help of others and the priest in his homily, what God is speaking to us to help us in our daily lives.

If there is a separate Children's Liturgy of the Word in your Church, encourage your child/children to go to it, as it will help in their understanding of what Jesus is saying to them.

Gospel Acclamation

We sing or say this to greet the Good News of the Gospel

Gospel Reading

- Remember the change to the response we make to the priest's greeting?

'The Lord be with you' 'And with your spirit'

- Remember the sign of the cross we made on coming into church? We now make another one, but this time we use the thumb of our right hand to trace the sign- on our forehead to show we believe God's Word;

on our lips to show we try to speak God's Word to others;

on our hearts to show we love God's Word and try to live a good life

The reading is taken from one of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

The Readings now end with the words: **"The Word of the Lord"** and **"The Gospel of the Lord"** to make them enthusiastic acclamations rather than statements of fact such as 'this is the Word of the Lord'.

Our responses to them have not changed, but should be filled with appreciation, praise and thanksgiving for God speaking to us in his Word.



The Prayer of the Faithful or Bidding Prayer

This is also a part of the Liturgy of the Word. We have listened to God speaking to us and now we think about all those who need our prayers.

It is good to encourage children to pray for other people to show their care for them and their trust in God who loves everyone.

Bedtime is also a time when the family could pray together to thank God for the day and ask his help and blessing.

- *Who needs our prayers?*
- *Family members? Friends and neighbours?*
- *Someone at church or in school?*
- *People who are ill, at home or in hospital?*
- *People in the world where there are wars and disasters?*



The Liturgy of the Eucharist

In this part of the Mass we begin to prepare for the meal, just as Jesus asked his disciples to get ready for their Last Supper which he was going to eat with them before he was to die on the cross.

What we do here is "in memory" of what Jesus did and we are really present there with him as he gave his life for us.

To draw attention to one aspect of the Eucharist, you may like to focus on the Table of the Lord and link it to what happens at home when you all have a meal together or when you have friends round for a meal.

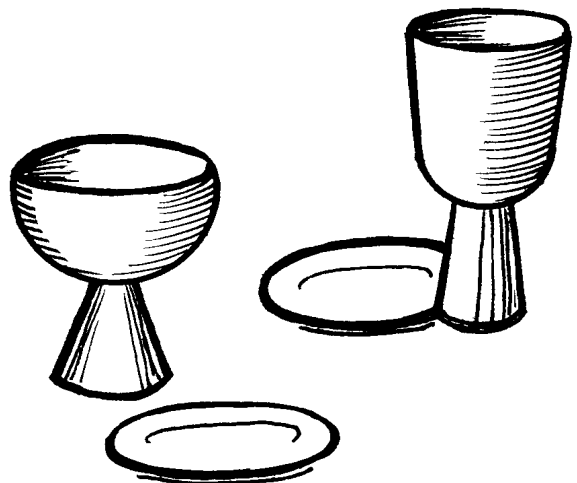
- *How do you prepare for a meal at home?*
- *Who sets the table? What is needed?*

Perhaps you can say the Grace before meals when you come to the table to share your food and the Grace after meals when you are finished eating. The children may have a special one which they pray at school.

The altar in Church is also known as the Table of the Lord where we gather round to give thanks, to do what Jesus did in memory of him and to eat. It needs to be set with a white cloth and then a special smaller cloth, called a **corporal**, is put on in the middle to catch any crumbs that may fall when the bread is broken.



A **ciborium** is used to hold the hosts and a **chalice** to contain the wine. There are candles at each side of the altar, or on the altar, and a book, called the **Missal**, from which the priest can read the prayers.



Procession with the Gifts

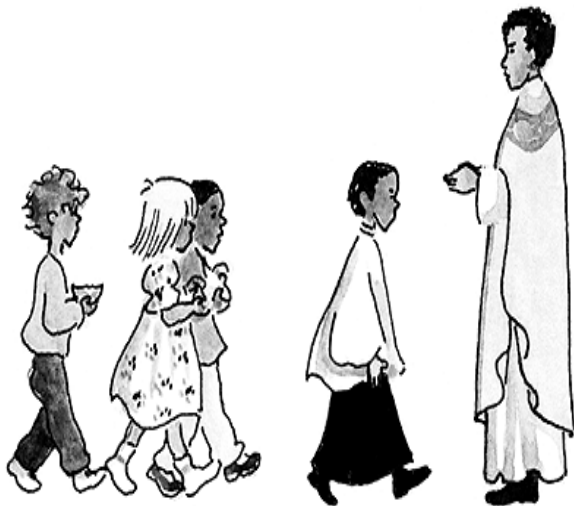
In the next part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist some people from the congregation walk down the aisle to the Sanctuary bringing gifts of bread and wine.

These are symbols of our hard work and the priest will consecrate them during Mass.

They also carry a gift of money which has just been collected from everyone in church to support its upkeep and that of the clergy.

At this moment everyone is offering themselves to God, as we might sing in the hymn: **"All that I am"** or something similar.

As a family you might like to take part in the procession to bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar.



During the procession you could ask yourselves: What do I bring of myself to the Lord? What does this mean for me?

Help the children to see that they are offering themselves to God. He has given us life and now we offer ourselves to Him.

The Preparation of the Gifts

When the priest has received the gifts of bread and wine, he mixes water with the wine as a sign that we share in God's life as God shares in ours. Then he offers them to God and asks us to join him in prayer that they may be acceptable to God our Father. There is a slight change to the last line of our response where we add 'holy' church. This reminds us that we are called to be holy and are united with Jesus in his Body, the Church, the Family of God.



The priest says:

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

And we reply:

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

To bring my sacrifice means the things that I do to help others, the sacrifices I make by putting other people first are brought to the Lord as a sign of my wanting to be close to him.

Talk to your child/children about these questions:

How can I be holy?

What do I bring as my sacrifice to show my love for other people?

The Eucharistic Prayer

This is a great prayer of thanksgiving spoken by the priest on our behalf. He greets us at the beginning of it in the usual way of **'The Lord be with you'** and we respond: **'And with your spirit'**, then we have a change in the last line. When the priest has invited us to give thanks, our response is: **'It is right and just'**. Saying this helps us to recognise that giving thanks is something we are all called to do, because God has done so much for us, has given us so much and goes on helping and rescuing us every day of our lives.

Read this story from the Gospel of Luke which tells us something about saying thank you.

"One day when Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, ten lepers came out from a village to meet him. They stood some distance away from him and called out, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us!'

When Jesus saw their suffering he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priest.'

The lepers set off and on the way they realised that their leprosy had disappeared and they were cured!

As the others ran to find the priest, one of the ten went back to find Jesus. He threw himself down before him, praising God at the top of his voice and thanking Jesus for his kindness.

'Were there not ten cured? Where are the other nine?' Jesus asked. 'Yet only one has bothered to thank God for his goodness.' Then he said to the man, 'Now go and see the priest, your faith in God has made you well.'"



- *What did the man do when he found himself cured?*
- *What did Jesus say to him when he came back?*
- *How do you think Jesus felt when the others did not say thank you?*
- *To whom do we say thank you? For what do we give thanks?*
- *Have you ever forgotten to say thank you to someone?*
- *How do you feel when someone does not thank you?*

Talk to your children about what they heard in the story.

Perhaps you could make up a litany of praise and thanks to God with your child/children. What might you include?

Holy Holy

In the story of the ten lepers Jesus comments that only one has come back "to thank God". In this prayer at the end of the Preface, we now do just that.

There is another slight change here, however, in the first line, when we say: **"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts"**. This does not refer to the communion hosts! Rather, it means that God is Lord of a whole 'host' of people on earth as well as the 'hosts' of angels in heaven. At this part of the Mass we join together in love, worship and praise of God and we remember that we are united to the living and the dead around the altar.

The words of the second part of the prayer are taken from the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem before his Passion when the people greeted him on Palm Sunday.



You may wish to read the story with your children from the Gospel of Mark

"Many people had lined the road to greet Jesus. They spread their cloaks on the road before him and waved palm branches in the air, as they shouted with joy, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

We have palm crosses on Palm Sunday to remind us of this.

Perhaps your family could then pray all the words together as part of bedtime prayers.

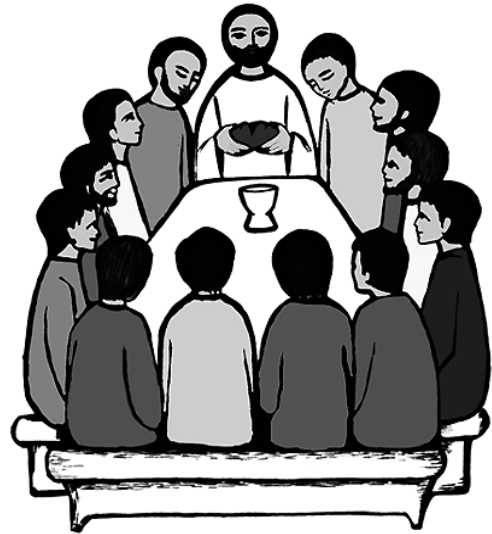
"Do this in Memory of Me"

During the long prayer of thanksgiving, we come to the part where we hear the priest say the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper.

Listen to the story as a family gathered around your own table for a meal.

"While Jesus was at table with his apostles, he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you.'

Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God and said, 'Take this, all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood..... which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me'."



- *Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have been there in the room with Jesus and the Apostles?*

Yet we still hear those words every time we share in the miracle of the Mass, so we are there and not just in the Upper Room, but on Calvary and at the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus.

When the priest leads us in the Eucharistic Prayer and says the words of Jesus as the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, it is important that we join in the Acclamation afterwards and at the great '**Amen**' to say we share in the offering and its promise of everlasting life.

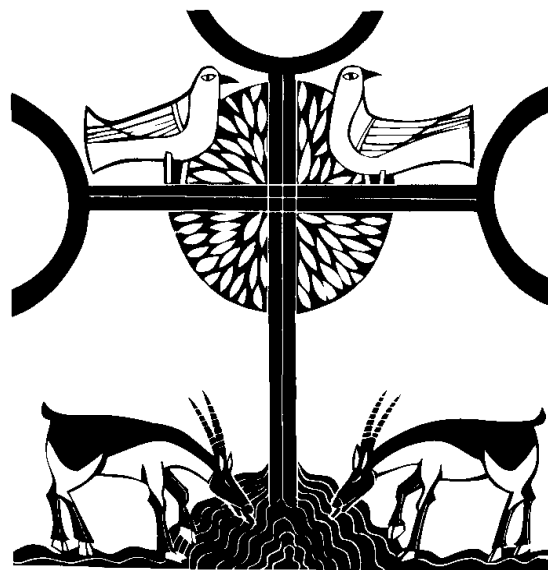


- *Practise saying the three new Acclamations after the Consecration.*
- *Which one do you like the best? Can you say why you like it? What does it mean to you?*

**We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.**

**When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.**

**Save us, Saviour of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.**



- *Which one do you like the best? Can you say why you like it? What does it mean to you?*

The Communion Rite & Dismissal

Our Father

The Apostles often noticed how Jesus went away to be by himself to pray. One day, as he came back to them, they asked him to teach them how to pray. This prayer is what he taught them and now we, too, know how to pray it. It is the prayer we have in common with all Christians, so if there is someone in the family who is not a Catholic, this is one of the special parts of the Mass where we can all share together in unity.

- *Slowly recite the Our Father together as a family united in prayer. What does that feel like to be praying it together?*
- *Are there any words you do not understand?*
- *How can God our Father give us 'daily bread'?*
- *What do we mean by 'trespasses'?*

Talk together and share your thoughts with each other.



The Sign of Peace

This is a sign of sharing the peace of Christ which no one else but Jesus can give us. When we make the gesture of shaking hands with others or kissing a member of our family while saying something like: "Peace" or "The peace of Christ", we are showing that what we share is a gift from Jesus and we are not just wishing people well. It is much more important than that. It is a very special moment and one of great joy.

Perhaps you can ponder on these thoughts for yourself and talk to your children about their understanding of 'peace'.

- What does it feel like when you are not at peace with yourself?
- When are you really at peace?
- What does the Sign of Peace mean to you?



Lord, I am not worthy

There are two significant changes to the words we say here, based on the words of the centurion in Matthew's Gospel.

Read it as a family and listen carefully to the words that the centurion says to Jesus.

"When Jesus went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him, 'Sir, my servant is lying at home paralysed and in great pain.'

'I will come myself and cure him,' said Jesus. The centurion replied, 'Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be healed.'



- *Can you find the phrases that are similar to the ones we now say at Mass?*
- *Can you work out a number in the word 'centurion'?*
- *Are there clues in the story to tell you what a centurion is?*

Saying the words 'under my roof' helps me to think of how Jesus makes his home in me and I must make mine in him.

As I echo the words of the centurion about my unworthiness to welcome Jesus I do not simply ask for forgiveness but recognise my need of the healing touch of Jesus in my life.

I must make Jesus welcome, listen to him and wait upon him as Martha and Mary did when they welcomed him under their roof.

Read the story of what happened from the Gospel of Luke.

"One day Jesus and his disciples came to the village called Bethany where his friends Martha and Mary lived. They welcomed Jesus and his followers and invited them to stay for a meal.

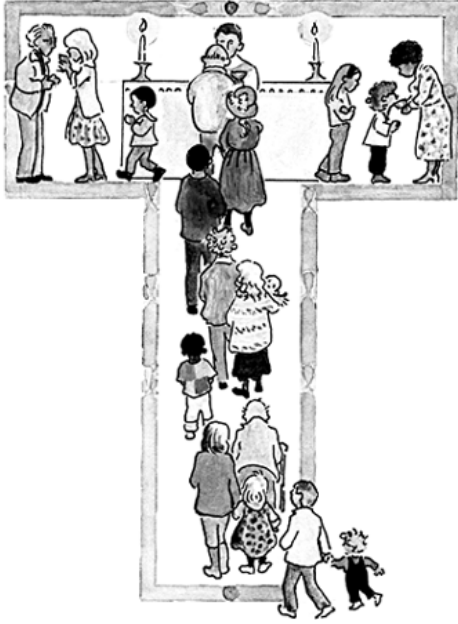
While Martha busied herself cooking and serving the food, her sister Mary sat calmly beside Jesus and listened to him talking. Martha worked hard, and all the while Mary sat listening to Jesus. Finally, Martha got upset and said to Jesus, 'Lord, must I do all this work on my own? Tell Mary to come and help me!'

'Martha, Martha,' Jesus said, 'you worry and get upset about so many things that are not so important. Mary has chosen to listen to me and that is the most important thing of all.'"



Talk together as a family about how we can be welcoming to others while listening to what Jesus tells us.

Procession to Communion



Another procession, this time to receive Jesus in Holy Communion or a blessing for younger children or members of the family who are not Catholics.

It is important to include everyone as members of the community.

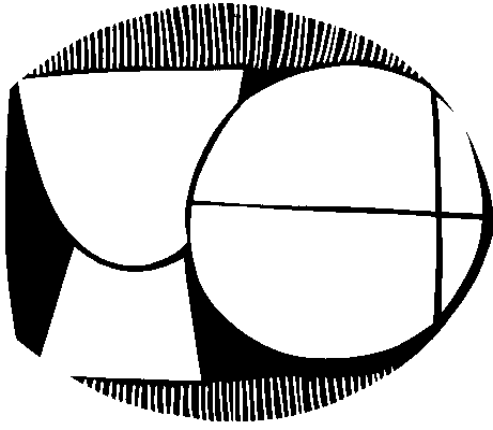
Help your child/children to practise again the manner in which they receive Jesus if they have made their First Holy Communion. Practise with them receiving in the form of the Host and in the form of wine from the Chalice.

If the children receive in the hand, remind them to place the open palm of their left hand over the open palm of their right hand and then to hold them out in front of the priest or minister of Holy Communion. The minister says 'The Body of Christ' and we reply 'Amen'. The word 'Amen' means 'So be it' or more simply 'Yes' or 'I agree'. The Host will then be placed in the open palm of their left hand and then they pick up the Host with the fingers of their right hand and place it in their mouth in order to chew and swallow it. (For left handed people, reverse the procedure.)

Children who wish to receive from the Chalice move to the minister holding the Chalice who will present it to them. The minister says 'The Blood of Christ' and we reply 'Amen'. They then take it and put it to their lips in order to drink a sip from the Chalice.

With hands joined, they return to their seat in a reverent manner.

For receiving in the mouth, please ensure that children put their tongue out sufficiently for the Host to be placed on it.



We should not refer to the Host as 'the bread' because it is no longer bread but Jesus Christ. Also we should avoid calling the contents of the Chalice 'the wine'. We believe it is Jesus Christ. Most properly it is to be called 'the Precious Blood'.

To help children understand that they are not drinking blood in a gross manner but receiving Jesus completely in each form (Host and Chalice) it is wise to stress that

to share the Chalice emphasises our sharing in Jesus life - that's what blood represents.

It also helps to remind us that Jesus died for us and that we are close to his saving work of the Cross and Resurrection at the Sacrifice of the Mass. How much detail we tell the children of this depends upon their capacity to understand.

For children who have not made their First Communion, they may receive a blessing from the priest. You can show your child how to cross his/her arms over the chest as they approach the priest, so that he will know to bless them.

Time to Go

The name 'Mass' comes from the Latin words 'Ite missa est' meaning to go out. We now have to go out from church to continue our everyday lives and take Jesus with us to everyone we meet - at home, at work, at school, in our neighbourhood.

- *How can I be a witness to the love of God?*
- *How can I behave to show others that I believe in Jesus?*

Perhaps you can help your child/children to think of examples and occasions at school and at home when they may need to say or do something that may go against what others may do or say.

