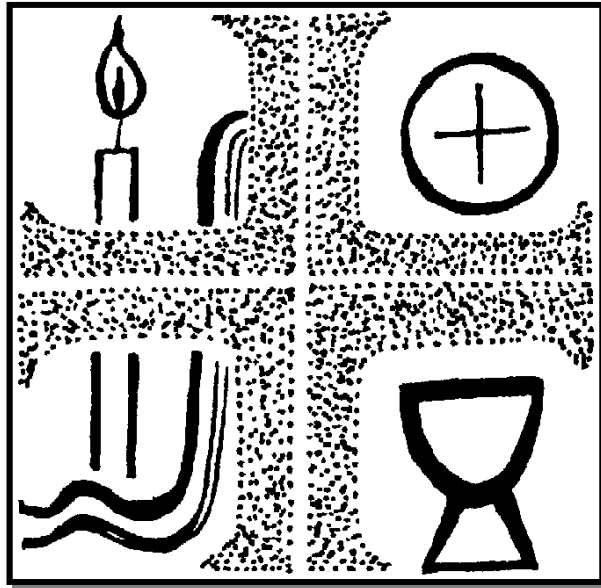




DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

**First Holy Communion
and
First Reconciliation**

2003

Foreword

These guidelines are based on the experience of those in the Church involved in Religious Education, Catechesis and Pastoral Theology. They have been drawn up after extensive consultation with priests, catechists and teachers and have been approved by the Diocesan Council of Priests.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to enable parishes to match their current practice with what our consultation across the Diocese discovered to be best practice.

The principle of Collaborative Ministry underpins these Guidelines. All of those responsible for sacramental preparation should make every effort to implement and be faithful to them, using the flexibility they contain, to meet particular needs and circumstances.

I would like to extend my thanks to the working party who have drawn up this document, the Council of Priests, groups of head teachers and most especially all of those involved throughout the Diocese who so willingly gave their time and energies to the consultation project.

*Rt. Rev. Dom Ambrose Griffith, O.S.B.
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle*

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The time of preparation of children for First Holy Communion should always be seen as an opportunity for evangelisation and pastoral initiative by the local Church, whatever the parents' motivation.

This time of preparation is a *teachable* moment when parents are more than usually open to evangelisation. This should never be overlooked.

"The time of preparation of children for the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, is a key time in the growth of the parent's faith."

(Pope John Paul II)

It is important that children and their families experience being part of a community. It is as a community that we all share in some way the understanding of God's love for us.

Individual personal contact between families and those involved in the preparation of children (First Holy Communion Preparation Team) is essential to all families.

There should be systems in place that give encouragement and support to parents and families of those children preparing for First Holy Communion. God meets them where they are. We must do the same. This time of preparation should be seen as an opportunity for the community to build on its relationships with families who feel that they do not fully belong to the Church.

It is recommended that structures are in place so that parents and families have the opportunity to share and grow in their faith in the Lord much earlier than the year in which their child(ren) make their First Holy Communion. Ideally, this journey would begin with their child's baptism and continue in stages throughout the child's school life.

This long-term work of faith development provides the proper context for the specific work to be done in preparation for First Holy Communion. This is a great opportunity for all of those involved, child, parent, priest,

catechists and teachers to develop their own faith and understanding of the Eucharist.

A list of support material for use by home, school and parish from Baptism onwards can be found in Appendix 1. Details of the 'Here I Am' and 'Icons' Programme used in schools from Early Years to Year 9 is contained in Appendix 2.

In particular we must be aware of and include those families with children with learning disabilities and those families whose children do not attend the parish school.

All who are involved in preparing children for First Holy Communion must be aware of and adhere to Diocesan Child Protection Guidelines.

It is recommended that a '**First Holy Communion Policy**' be in place in each parish. It should be drawn up by the parish (priest & catechists), school and parents. It should be reviewed on a regular basis, for example annually. See Appendix 3 for examples of such policy statements.

II. THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

Introduction

"Then he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it and gave it to them saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me' "

(Luke 22:18)

When Christians celebrate Holy Communion they are carrying out this command of Jesus.

Each family is an individual community in which Christ is present and so can be called the Domestic Church. The larger parish community includes all these family groups. When they gather together to celebrate Holy Communion they become the Body of Christ in that locality.

Jesus said that the bread and wine at the Last Supper is his body and blood. In the same way, the bread and wine, carried to the altar at the offertory, symbolises the lives, fears, pain, joys, hopes and dreams of everyone who has gathered in that place. This bread and wine is transformed at the altar, into the Body and Blood of Jesus and in that same action those who receive are transformed also, so that they can become Christ to others. Jesus nourishes those who receive Holy Communion with himself, the Bread of Life. In this way the communicant is united to Jesus and with the rest of the community of the Church. Together they can call God their Father and enjoy the forgiveness of sins. Jesus, the Bread of Life, asks those who receive him in their turn to become like him and become food for others by caring for those in need.

As they carry out this command given at the end of Mass, to "Go out to love and serve the Lord" in the people they meet each day, they will recognise that the Eucharist is both the "source and summit" of their lives.

THE CHILD

**"People were bringing little children to him,
for him to touch them.
The disciples scolded them,
but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them,
'Let the little children come to me;
do not stop them for it is such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.
In truth I tell you,
anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never
enter it.'
Then he embraced them,
laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing."**

(Mark 10:13-16)

Preparation for First Holy Communion should ideally involve children with their family, with their teacher in school, with a catechist, with their priest and their parish community.

Children's readiness to receive their First Holy Communion is determined by their ability to discern that Holy Communion is special. The way in which this is expressed needs to be in accordance with each child's age and capability and so the age of seven or eight years need not to be applied with rigidity as an absolute indication of readiness to receive Holy Communion.

Deciding on the child's readiness should be the responsibility of the priest, parents, catechists and teachers together.

**CJC: 914 "It is the responsibility, in the first place,
of parents and those who take the place of parents
as well as of the priest to see that children who have reached the age of
reason are correctly prepared
and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible."**

The usual care should be taken to check that those being prepared for First Holy Communion have been baptized into the Catholic Church. Children, who have not been baptised or have been baptised into another Christian denomination, must be received into the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Children.

The responsibility and involvement of the child, in their own preparation, reflects that process of development that has taken place since baptism, which was their first sacrament of initiation into the Catholic Church. The time between Baptism and First Holy Communion has been identified as a key time for the evangelisation of parents and children. Programmes have been developed to address this need; recommended resources can be found in Appendix 1. Children's Liturgy of the Word is also an opportunity to support a child's faith development prior to and after First Holy Communion. However, Children's Liturgy of the Word relates directly to the Sunday liturgy and should not be used for direct First Holy Communion preparation.

In addition special attention needs to be given to those children who do not attend Catholic Schools so that when they reach the time of First Holy Communion preparation they already have some experience of religious formation. Suitable resources, including the 'Walk with Me' Programme are included in Appendix 1.

Every effort should be made to integrate children who are perceived to have special needs, together with their families, into the process of preparation within the parish.

The Bishops' Conference document 'Valuing Difference' refers to three main categories of disability, they are: physical, sensory and learning.

'Part of the body of Christ is missing when any individual is excluded from Church life. Everyone therefore has both a need for, and a right to, access to all the activities which make up Catholic life and mission, and to the ministries and responsibilities which are open to all the baptised within Catholic teaching.'

Valuing Difference from Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
(People with disabilities in the life and mission of the Church) Access and Inclusion: General

Whether or not these children attend special schools, they should be seen as part of the local parish Christian community. Finding ways of accomplishing this often requires extra thought and planning. Including children and adults with special needs means that we recognise their valued role, leading to a sense of mutuality within the group and the community. This does not only mean looking for ways into which we can integrate those with special needs into the main group. In fact, experience shows that there is real value to be gained in everyone else taking part with and receiving from, those with needs that may be different from their own.

**“What is more,
it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are
the indispensable ones..”**

(1 Cor. 12:22)

PARENTS AND FAMILY

In Pope John Paul II's address to the parents of First Communicants at Cardiff, he emphasises their vital part in bringing up their children 'in the ways of faith.....'

"Dear parents of these children:

Your love for Christ has made this day possible.

For you are your children's first teachers in the ways of faith.

By what you say and do,

you show them the truths of our faith and the values of the Gospel.

This is indeed not only a sacred duty,

but a grace,

a great privilege.

Many other members of the Church share in this task,

but the main responsibility for your children's

religious formation rests upon your shoulders.

So try to make your homes genuinely Christian.

Help your children to grow and mature

as Jesus did in Nazareth,

'in wisdom,

in stature and in favour with God and men.'

**Allow no one to take advantage of their lack of
experience and knowledge.**

As you share with them in their personal pilgrimage to God,

may you always be united in prayer and worship and in humble love of God

and his people."

(The Pope Teaches - The Pope in Britain, Catholic Truth Society, 1982)

As parents are the child's first teacher in matters of faith, it is they who have the main responsibility in preparing their child(ren) for First Holy Communion.

As well as wanting their child to make his/her First Holy Communion they must also be willing to develop their child's faith through working with their child and attending parents' meetings not only at this time but from Baptism onwards.

Parents, with the encouragement and support of the community, need to recognise that because the Eucharist involves the 'Body of Christ', the Church, it is a community activity. Therefore the understanding and skills that children need to enable them to enter fully into the sacrament can only be gained through participating in the parish celebrations.

This time of preparation is a significant moment in the development of faith in the Lord which begins at Baptism. It is an opportunity for parents to grow in their own faith and to gain a deeper understanding and love of the Eucharist at a level that is appropriate to their situation.

Parents and families of children preparing for First Holy Communion need to be affirmed in the way they are bringing up their children within the Catholic faith. This is shown mainly in the way they love, care and pray with their children and the way in which they help them share in the worship of the community.

Parental support and example is very important at this time. A total lack of parent's practical participation in the process should raise the question of deferral of First Holy Communion for their child(ren). However some children make heroic efforts without parental support and should be warmly welcomed to celebrate the Eucharist. Such children may well evangelise their own parents.

PARISH

The General Directory of Catechesis reminds us that Jesus at the beginning of his ministry:

**"...made himself a catechist of the Kingdom of God for
all categories of persons,
great and small,
rich and poor,
healthy and sick,
near and far,
Jews and pagans,
men and women,
righteous and sinners,
rulers and subjects,
individuals and groups.
He is available to all.
He is interested in the needs of every person,
body and soul.
He heals and forgives,
corrects and encourages,
with words and deeds."**

(General Directory of Catechesis n 163)

Every parish or group of parishes should have a process of preparation for First Holy Communion for both children and their families. Sufficient time should be given to this to enable children to grow in their understanding of the sacrament and to enable families to feel part of the Eucharistic community.

Responsibility for First Holy Communion preparation should be taken by each parish. However, in the light of current developments the responsibility may also be taken up by a cluster of parishes, a pastoral area or a deanery. Where these structures exist, they can be used to provide support to each of the parishes and contribute towards some common practice among them.

Each parish is encouraged to set up a First Holy Communion Preparation Team. It should include the parish priest, catechists, representatives of parents and the school as well as an overall co-ordinator. The team includes all of those who take some responsibility in the preparation of both children and their families. It is the role of this team, with training and guidance, to carry out the task of preparing children and their families. It is through this team that the parish takes on its responsibility to provide welcome, nurture, support, witness and prayer for the candidates and their families. Many adults do not very often take the time to reflect on their lives and on their faith. This is a unique opportunity for all involved to discover the presence of Christ in their lives.

A member of the team needs to take responsibility for co-ordinating the programme. This should not be the priest or the school representative. The co-ordinator needs to ensure that the parish works closely with schools in order to offer opportunities to meet with the families. This meeting of families could be in school, in church or in their own homes. This time of preparation should be seen as an opportunity to reach out, to befriend, support and invite children and their families into the whole Eucharistic community.

The role of the priest on the team needs to be clear. He is the spiritual guide and a resource for each team member as well as the children and families involved. He must also have particular care for the catechists.

“Priests must promote and discern vocations to the service of catechesis, and as a catechist of catechists attend to their formation by giving greatest attention to this duty.”

(General Directory of Catechesis n 234)

The team should also include a number of catechists to work with the children and their families. The role of the catechist is so important that care should be taken in the selection of people for this ministry. They should be able to relate well to children and parents and have a good understanding of the way in which the Church now prepares people for the reception of the Sacraments. As with other ministries within the Church, it is essential that catechists have on-going training and formation.

Part of the work of the catechist is to develop and strengthen the link between the home and the parish. Therefore it is recommended that these catechists be supported by a group of parishioners who can take on the role of befriending families, especially at this time of preparation. They should be warm, friendly and non-judgmental, be able to keep confidences and have the good of the families at heart. This group of parishioners is there to act as a direct link between the family and parish community. They would need to follow through any queries or problems as they arise on a personal level and liaise with the co-ordinator as appropriate. It is essential that they see themselves as an integral part of the entire parish evangelising process from Baptism onwards.

When the team comes together they should recognise the importance of their own on-going personal growth and faith development. Time needs to be given in the planning sessions to prayer and scripture reflection. This leads to an ever-growing awareness of the opportunity to understand what the teachings and tradition of the Church mean to them as parents, priests, catechists and teachers.

Whilst no one particular programme is recommended to be used at this time of preparation for children, there are a number of different programmes available as recommended by the Diocesan Religious Education Centre.

See Appendix 4. The choice of programme should be made depending upon the pastoral and educational needs of the Eucharistic Community (the home, the school and the parish). There is no reason why the programmes cannot be adapted or that a parish develop its own programme to suit its own needs.

“The aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”

(General Directory of Catechesis n 80)

There are a variety of ways of working with parents and families whose children are preparing for First Holy Communion. It can be done in small group clusters or as a large group, meeting in either the school or parish hall.

The preparation process should be flexible enough to accommodate itself to the situations of people's lives e.g. alternative arrangements should be made to accommodate parents who do shift work. Consideration should be given to single parent families who may have difficulty in arranging childcare and also to committed parents who have already participated in the programme on previous occasions. Allowance may have to be made for the preparation of individual families where circumstances dictate.

Every member of the team needs to be aware that much of the work they do with parents in sacramental preparation will have a considerable effect on the faith of the parents themselves. The quality of the relationship with the families as well as the input by catechists and all of the team is a vital factor in adult faith development. The use of prayer and scripture is as important when meeting with parents as it is when working with the children. It needs to be stressed that this time of preparation is not a one-off event. There should be the opportunity for parents and families to explore their faith from the moment of their child's Baptism and continue to do so through an adult journey in faith programme if they so wish.

SCHOOL

While the responsibility of supporting families lies with the parish, the school has a significant role in supporting those families who may feel initially more at ease making contact with the school. The school principally provides a continuing process of sacramental education through the 'Here I Am' and 'Icons' programmes.

It is important that all concerned, including the children, understand that 'Sacramental Preparation' is not confined to a specific moment in time e.g. Year 3 for First Holy Communion or Year 8 for Confirmation, but is a life long process. This sacramental education is best achieved when schools, through its ethos, creates an environment in which a child not only learns but can grow in personal faith.

"The Gospel of Jesus Christ invites all who follow its teaching to the fullness of life.

Discipleship in the Gospel is life-long, a journey of faith coming to complete fulfillment only in the presence of God in heaven.

The entire life of the disciple is marked by learning and growth.

Life-long growth in faith is to be the characteristic of Catholic Life."

(Religious Education in Catholic Schools, a statement from the Catholic Bishop's Conference of England & Wales, May, 2000)

The effective teacher builds on previous learning and enables the pupil to make connections. All teachers of Religious Education in Catholic schools have a responsibility to ensure that their students receive the appropriate sacramental education as indicated in the Bishops' Document, 'The Curriculum Directory.' The Religious Education Programmes 'Here I Am' for Primary and 'Icons' for Secondary provide this opportunity. This is the student's entitlement. It is important that previous learning is re-visited in order to enable progression and deepen understanding. Parents, teachers of Religious Education, catechists and priests should therefore familiarise themselves with the sacramental education contained in both these programmes. These are outlined in Appendix 2. Failure to do this could create repetition that does not deepen understanding and the opportunity to develop further the Religious Education of the child(ren) is lost.

Teachers also need to understand that although they contribute to the Religious Education of the children at the time of First Holy Communion preparation, they are not responsible for the whole of it. Their familiarity with the future learning in Religious Education should help them to realise that the religious development of students will be on-going.

The school is one of the primary resources to the parish and should support the parish sacramental process implemented by the 'First Holy Communion Preparation Team'. It can do this by providing communication links and other opportunities for the family and the parish to come together. For example, through the school the parish could provide opportunities for children and their families to participate in children's masses.

Where schools take pupils from various parishes there needs to be co-operation between the parishes themselves and the school. The home, school and parish should work closely together, as the children belong to each of these communities in different ways.

LITURGY AND PRAYER

"A fully Christian life cannot be conceived without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery.

It is not right to separate such liturgical and eucharistic formation from the general human and Christian education of children.

Indeed it would be harmful if liturgical formation lacked such a foundation.

For this reason all who have a part in the formation of children should consult and work together.

In this way even if children already have some feeling for God and the things of God, they may also experience the human values which are found in the eucharistic celebration, depending upon their age and personal progress.

These values are the activity of the community,

exchange of greetings,

capacity to listen and to seek and grant pardon,

expression of gratitude,

experience of symbolic action,

a meal of friendship,

and festive celebration."

(Directory for Masses with Children n 8 & 9)

This time of preparation should be an opportunity for all involved to come together in prayer. By participating in suitably prepared liturgies, (Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic) children and adults can come to a better appreciation of what is being celebrated and form a deeper understanding of the Eucharist.

Each stage of this journey should be celebrated as a community response in prayer and liturgy. The specific involvement of parents and children at the time of First Holy Communion preparation at some Sunday Masses is to be encouraged. It is recommended that other opportunities be provided within the school for families, parish and school to come together to celebrate.

It is through prayer and scripture that we are all awakened to God's presence among us.

It is strongly recommended that Holy Communion be received under both kinds at the First Holy Communion Mass and that where possible that the First Holy Communion Mass be celebrated, not as an isolated event, but with the participation of the whole parish community.

III. THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Introduction

All human beings experience conflict with others and within themselves. Reconciliation, therefore, is an important human need because it offers the opportunity for broken relationships to be healed and forgiveness celebrated.

At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief that *'God is my friend always'*. The constant, unfailing love of God reaches out to each of us, to restore our relationship with Him when it is damaged through our lack of loving. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can celebrate the restoration of our friendship with God.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation enables each person to acknowledge that their brokenness is not only painful for him or her as an individual but also painful for the whole community.

"If one part of the body suffers all the other parts suffer with it;"

(1 Cor. 12:26)

The Penitential Service with Individual Confession emphasises this. The appropriate use of Scripture within the Rite of Reconciliation should both challenge our refusal to love and also reassure us of God's forgiveness. The laying on of hands by the priest who represents the whole community highlights the human need for reassurance and belonging. The individual is touched by the community and is reconciled to it.

The penance allows the individual to do something to put right the damage his refusal to love has caused and it also enables a new commitment to ongoing renewal.

It is important that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in an environment, which reflects the joy, peace and freshness of life that the sacrament brings.

RECONCILIATION

**"The whole Church,
as a priestly people
acts in different ways in the work of reconciliation
that has been entrusted to it by the Lord.
Not only does the Church call sinners to repentance
by preaching the word of God,
but it also intercedes for them
and helps penitents with maternal care and solicitude
to acknowledge and confess their sins
and to obtain the mercy of God,
who alone can forgive sins.
Further, the Church becomes itself the instrument
of the conversion and absolution
of the penitent through the ministry entrusted by Christ
to the apostles and their successors."**

(Rite of Penance, Introduction, n 8)

Those responsible for the preparation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are as set out in the guidelines for First Holy Communion.

It is recommended that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be prepared for and celebrated at a different time to that of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This is to emphasize the value of the sacrament in its own right as a personal encounter with the forgiving Father. It will also help to avoid the danger of children who have not committed grave sin receiving the impression of having to go to confession before receiving Holy Communion.

It has to be understood that the Rite of Penance speaks of penance and reconciliation strictly in terms of adult experience and that no principles are suggested for applying the rite to children.

It is, therefore, important that all involved in the preparation of children for this sacrament help to develop in them an awareness of sin, forgiveness and the mercy of God which is appropriate to their age and experience.

It is of equal importance that children develop this awareness from the earliest years and not only in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

To help children understand in some way the tremendous personal love of God for each of us, they should be given the opportunity to reflect on their lives in the presence of their companions. This should be set in an environment of prayerfulness and quietness, which helps them to become aware of God's presence among them.

The 'Reconciliation Room' (area) should be warm and welcoming, well lit and decorated with signs and symbols of support and encouragement.

Children should be encouraged to confess those times when they have refused to love. They should be encouraged to ask for forgiveness for those times in order to experience the joy of being forgiven. In particular they should be encouraged to confess sins in language that expresses their understanding of reality, and not in abstract terms.

Adults too, should be aware of the need to develop a sense of sin, forgiveness and the mercy of God as an integral part of their own faith development.

The most essential element of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the experience of being forgiven. A child's first experience of forgiveness is primarily within the home. This is often expressed as a cuddle or a kiss. In light of the Diocesan Child Protection Guidelines, the way in which forgiveness is expressed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation needs to be a different experience. Forgiveness should be expressed verbally and with a positive and appropriate gesture such as a smile.

It is for these reasons that, for the child's first experience, the Diocese recommends communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as set out in Rite Two (B), (*Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution*) of the Rite of Penance. Particular help for adapting the Rite for children is given in Appendix II, part IV Reconciliation for Children within the Rite.

Suggestions for appropriate reconciliation liturgies can be found in many of the First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation Programmes.

APPENDIX 1

Recommended Resources for Home, School and Parish from Baptism onwards for use with children.

Passing On Our Faith - to Children in their early years

Jenny Pate McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-632-2

This book offers some thoughts and suggests some practical ways for parents and others to nurture their child's faith during their early years.

It is primarily a resource for parents and the child's wider family but will also be of interest to parish catechists and teachers of young children.

Journeying Together - Home, School & Parish

Frank McDermott & Chris Cahill

Matthew James Publishing

A resource that provides an exciting and realistic framework for Church, schools and parishes to support parents in their task as the first and foremost educators of their children. It seeks to strengthen and develop links between home, school and parish.

Walk With Me and On We Go

McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-5806

Walk with Me is an on-going 4 year programme for use in parishes, ensuring that those children not attending Catholic schools may benefit from the same religious education. Conceived and written by the Department for Catholic Education and Formation, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Each year contains material which can be used for the entire primary age range.

'On We Go' worksheets are the link between catechist and parents.

Stories Jesus Told - Parables for Kids

St. Paul Multimedia Productions ISBN 5-031446-725573

An adaptation of the Parables of The Sower, The Good Samaritan, The Lost Sheep, The Prodigal Son and The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

These four-minute stories, on video, are ideal for home, parish and classroom use.

Jesus, Our Light - The early life of Jesus

McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-611-X

Jesus, Our Hope - The ministry of Our Lord

McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-612-8

Jesus Our Way - The final events in the life of Jesus

McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-613-6

A series of books with accompanying posters.

The use of traditional meditation techniques with children can provide an important opportunity for spiritual development. The images in the books, and the associated posters, can be used as the stimulus for reflection.

The books are designed to help parents, catechists, teachers and R.E. co-ordinators to make the most of the beautiful images.

God's Story 1-3

Anne White, Chris Malone & Ann Byrne SND

Rejoice Publications

'God's Story' presents the Scriptures to children through the eyes and words of the people who believe in God; the people of the first covenant and the people of the new covenant. 'God's Story' is a major scriptural resource that can be used:

In the Home to introduce children to the people, prayers, stories and teachings of the Scriptures.

At School alongside Religious Education programmes such as 'Here I Am', as a resource for Literacy Schemes and as a source book for classroom prayer and school worship.

In the Parish where it will be useful for catechists preparing children for the sacraments and for those providing Liturgy of the Word for Children.

The three books offer progression in language, style of presentation and choice of texts. The 'Notes for Adults' will help adults to deepen their own understanding and love of the Scriptures and to encourage children in their learning and understanding.

The Scripture texts, based on the Good News Bible, the Jerusalem Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible, are the work of diocesan primary advisers of England and Wales.

God's Story 1 is for the very youngest children ISBN 1-899481-16-8

God's Story 2 is for ages 5-7 ISBN 1-899481-17-6

God's Story 3 is for ages 7-11 and beyond ISBN 1-899471-18-4

Recommended Resources for Home, School and Parish
from Baptism onwards for use with Adults

Guilt-Free Parenting

David Wells, Catholic Evangelisation Services

This series of videos provides an opportunity to bring parents together and to give them a chance to explore with each other their parenting, their lives and their faith and so to affirm one another. Topics covered include Baptism, Confession and the Mass.

Knowing God Better - A series of seven talks, available on video, by David Payne, Director of Catholic Evangelisation Services.

In these talks adults are invited to consider God's Love, Grace and Forgiveness. They include mime, testimonies, music and opportunities for prayerful reflection.

Exploring the Catholic Church -Dr. D'Ambrosio

"Marcellino D'Ambrosio has the gift of making Catholic Doctrine easily accessible and really inspiring."

(Rt. Rev. Ambrose Griffiths, O.S.B. Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle)

A video resource that gives adults the opportunity to explore together such topics as the Catholic Church, Sacraments, Mary and the Saints.

"Will Our Children Believe?" Michael Paul Gallagher SJ

Veritas ISBN 1-85390-369-8

Many parents who want to pass on the faith to their children feel insecure in their own believing and belonging. Michael Paul Gallagher believes that parents can serve their children best by nourishing the roots of their own faith— 'faith is caught, not taught,' and children will 'catch' the faith if they see it lived and living around them. Fr. Gallagher encourages parents not to be neutral in passing on the faith.

He cites the current interest in spirituality and the inner self as evidence of young people's search for faith, and says that if young people are given the basis - security and trust - at home, they will be well prepared to live the faith throughout their lives.

The following are websites that may be of interest to parents with young children, as well as catechists and teachers working with children aged 3-11 years:

www.homefaith.com

www.catholicfamily.org

Appendix 2

Sacramental Education in Schools

Children in Year Three who are being prepared to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation in 2003 will have already experienced some education in these sacraments. That learning is outlined below:

Eucharist

In their Early Years the children will have learned that the Eucharist is about saying 'Thank you to God for Jesus'. In year One they will learn how the people gather together in church on Sundays to celebrate the Eucharist. This is developed in year Two, by learning about the Eucharist as a special meal that is shared by the family of the Church. They will have also learned that they became part of that family at Baptism. At the end of year Three they will have explored how the Eucharist remembers the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Reconciliation

In their Early Years they will come to understand that Jesus is their friend, (friendship being the basis of reconciliation). In year One they see how the choices we make can hurt others and make them unhappy but that God wants us to choose actions that will be loving. At the end of year Two they come to know that it is possible for people to change their lives through the kindness of Jesus. The Gospel accounts of the way Zacchaeus and Matthew changed are used to illustrate this. In year Three the children learn about how the Ten Commandments are God's rules that allow us to live happily, freely and responsibly.

After the Reception of these sacraments in Year Three their Sacramental Education continues in a more detailed way, especially by looking at the Rites in order to provide a deeper understanding.

Eucharist

In year Four the focus is on the prayers used during the celebration of the Eucharist especially the Eucharistic prayer because it expresses the greatest act of thanksgiving. In year Five the emphasis is on the way the Eucharist both challenges and helps us to become the Body of Christ by growing in communion with Christ and others every day of our lives. The rite of Peace is studied. In their final year of primary education pupils will learn that Jesus is the Bread of Life and the Lamb of God. The emphasis is on the symbols of Bread and Wine. In secondary school students will go on to appreciate how the Eucharist is life giving and central to the life and mission of the Church. The concept of commitment and sacrifice as part of life is also explored and the way the Eucharist is the living memory of the commitment and sacrifice of Jesus

Reconciliation

In year Four, the emphasis is on admitting responsibility (Contrition) for doing wrong, in order to be reconciled with God and others. The pupils are taught that sin is choosing to do something that they know isn't right. This is developed further in year Five by learning how to put right what they have done wrong by acknowledging that they have chosen wrongly (Confession).

The concept of Conversion as a change of heart is dealt with in year Six by looking at the life of St. Peter as both a saint and a sinner. Children are helped to see that Christians believe that they can keep changing for the better every day of their lives.

The secondary years enable pupils to see forgiveness (Absolution) and reconciliation as necessary for change and how that is celebrated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They also explore the reality of struggle and sin in life and that God's love, forgiveness, mercy and healing are always available to them.

APPENDIX 3

A Model Parish Sacramental Preparation Policy (A)

.....Parish

**"Let the little children come to me:
Do not stop them for it is such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs."
(Mark 10: 14)**

Children should be prepared for the sacraments as soon as they are ready. It is a key time of growth for them and we are committed to doing the best we can for our children.

We will be involving families, schools and the people of the parish/cluster/pastoral area. All those involved have a vital role to play and a chance to grow in their own faith too.

What we will do

We will appoint a Co-ordinator, who will lead the preparation of children wishing to receive the sacraments of First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation.

The Co-ordinator will work with the priest, the catechists and parents and arrange links with the school(s).

We will ensure that what we are doing meets the recommendations of the Diocesan Guidelines for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation, and the Guidelines for Child Protection.

We will:

1. organise a programme to prepare children for the sacraments.
2. Let you know who you can talk to, so that you can decide when your child is ready.
3. Make sure that the programme helps children to grow and truly prepares them for the sacraments.
4. Make sure that the children and their families are welcomed into the community of the Church from baptism onwards by providing them with opportunities to grow in faith.
5. Make sure that everyone is included in preparing the children and the liturgies.
6. Involve people of the parish in befriending and supporting the children and their families.
7. ensure that the Co-ordinator talks to parents and catechists and reports back to the parish/cluster/pastoral area annual meeting; to let them know how well things are working and to decide if any changes are needed for the next year.

REVIEW:

The Team Co-ordinator will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the success of this policy.

The Parish Council will review this policy on.....

APPENDIX 3

A Model Parish Sacramental Preparation Policy (B)

.....Parish

**"Let the little children come to me:
Do not stop them for it is such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs."**
(Mark 10: 14)

RATIONALE:

We recognise:

'That children who have reached the age of reason should be correctly prepared and nourished by the divine food as early as possible'
(CJC914)

We also recognise that the preparation of children for the Sacraments is a key time of growth for all those involved in that preparation, including families, schools and parishes. We therefore acknowledge that our approach to sacramental preparation will place the child at its heart and recognise the vital role and contribution made by home, school and parish.

PRACTICE:

We will set up a team annually who will be responsible for the Preparation of the children wishing to receive the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation. The team will consist of a Team Co-ordinator who will lead the team, parish catechists, a representative from the parish school, a representative of the parents of the children to be prepared and a priest of the parish. This team will have the responsibility of establishing the following:

1. A process that offers parents a genuine opportunity to grow in faith from baptism onwards which will enable them to decide when to present their child(ren) for sacramental preparation.
2. A timetable for sacramental preparation of those children.
3. A programme of preparation that will facilitate the initiation of the children and their families into the community of the Church.
4. A system, which will enable everyone involved to take a full part in all the preparation activities as well as in the liturgies themselves.
5. A group of parishioners who will befriend and support families of children preparing for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation.
6. An annual written evaluation of the effectiveness of the procedures and programme for each year, which will inform decisions for the following year.

We will ensure that the Diocesan Guidelines for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation and the Diocesan Guidelines for Child Protection are followed.

REVIEW:

The Team Co-ordinator will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the success of this policy.

The Parish Council will review this policy on.....

APPENDIX 4

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION RESOURCES

I am Preparing for my First Confession

Marie-Paule Mordefroid. Translated by John McCollough and Jean Claude Selvini McCrimmons, ISBN 0-85597-619-5

I am Preparing for my First Communion

Marie-Paule Mordefroid. Translated by John McCollough and Jean Claude Selvini McCrimmons ISBN 0-85597-618-7

Children are introduced to the Mass through the stories of 'The Prodigal Son' and 'Zacchaeus'. These books can be used by individuals, in a group, in a family at church or at school. There is a pullout section for parents and catechists.

I Belong - Children's Book

Redemptorist ISBN 0-85231-171-0

I Belong - Parent's Guide

Redemptorist ISBN 0-85231-172-9

I Belong - Leader's Guide

Redemptorist ISBN 0-85231-172-9

***I Belong** is a preparation journey, which is based on the framework of our celebration of the Eucharist. The material used is grounded in the Bible and in The Catechism of the Catholic Church to which full references are given to aid preparation and planning of each session. The programme includes two sections on reconciliation.*

Celebrating Our Faith - Reconciliation - Children's Book

Harcourt Brace ISBN 0-15950-458-9

Celebrating Our Faith - Eucharist - Children's Book

Harcourt Brace ISBN 0-15950-447-3

Celebrating Our Faith - Reconciliation - Teaching Guide

Harcourt Brace ISBN 1-50950-459-7

Celebrating Our Faith - Eucharist - Teaching Guide

Harcourt Brace ISBN 0-15-950-457-0

Each of the children's books addresses the meaning of the particular sacrament in the Church, emphasising on-going reception and celebration. They are also keepsakes for the child's celebration of his or her first Holy Communion and First Reconciliation. The teaching guides include an overview as well as lesson plans, handouts, activities and family teaching notes.

God's Greatest Gift - Catechist Guide

Viewpoint Resources Direct ISBN 1-89991-600-8

God's Greatest Gift - Parent's Guide

Viewpoint Resources Direct, 1996, ISBN 1-89991-602-4

God's Greatest Gift - Children's Book

Viewpoint Resources Direct ISBN 1-89991-604-0

God's Greatest Gift is primarily a parish-based programme, one in which parents play the key role in preparing children for First Holy Communion.

Celebrating First Eucharist

June Edwards

Matthew James Publishing ISBN 1-898366-28-4

A series designed for use with people with learning difficulties who respond readily to a sensory approach which uses ritual and symbol to help them connect their own personal 'lived' experience with the spiritual.

Loved and Forgiven - Preparation for Reconciliation

Joan Brown SND

Kevin Mayhew ISBN 0-86209-276-0

Meet Christ with Joy - Preparation for First Communion

Joan Brown SND

Kevin Mayhew ISBN 0-86209-172-1

The Parents' and Catechists' Companion to 'Loved and Forgiven' and 'Meet Christ with Joy'

Kevin Mayhew ISBN 1-84003-474-2

A programme for families— Colourful activity books designed to help parents and children journey together towards the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Whether the children's preparation is home-based or also involves parish and school, these books will form a complete and personal record of this special time.

Family Faith - Reconciliation

Redemptorist Publications ISBN 0-85231-245-8

Family Faith - Eucharist

Redemptorist Publications ISBN 0-85231-244-X

A series of workshops to be run by catechists to help support parents in handing on their faith within their own families. The workshops are complementary to whatever sacramental preparation programme is being followed in the parish or school.

We Celebrate the Eucharist

Christiane Brusselmans and Brian A. Haggerty

Silver Burdett & Ginn

(United Kingdom Edition) ISBN 0-382- 00629-1

We Celebrate Reconciliation

Christiane Brusselmans and Brian A Haggerty

Silver Burdett & Ginn ISBN 0-382-00023-4

The books provide children with picture essays, Scripture stories, liturgical prayers and learning activities to help them grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Eucharist and the worshipping community. The Family Guide gives parents easy to follow directions for exploring each Eucharistic theme with their children. The Catechist Guide has clearly presented background information and pre-session reflections for catechists together with complete lesson plans.

Journey Together Towards First Holy Communion

Paddy Rylands

Kevin Mayhew ISBN 1-84003-608-7

Journey Together Towards Reconciliation

Paddy Rylands

Kevin Mayhew ISBN 1-84003-609-5

A resource for catechists accompanying parents of children preparing to celebrate First Holy Communion. This resource presents methods which can be used within the parish to encourage adult catechesis and parishioner participation

Moments That Matter - Preparing for the Sacrament of Eucharist

Rejoice Publications ISBN 1-899481-04-4

Moments That Matter - Preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Rejoice Publications ISBN 1-889481-05-2

A resource for parents which helps them reflect on the meaning of the sacraments of Holy Communion and reconciliation in their own lives and family situations. The two books are part of a series of four, which considers four key moments in their children's faith journey; Starting School, Preparing for the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation and Moving On from primary to secondary school.

The following is a description of the Children's Catechumenate book:

Student text Primary level	ISBN 0159503752	£10.95
Student text Intermediate level	ISBN 0159503744	£10.95
Student text Upper level	ISBN 0159503736	£ 9.50
Catechist Manual	ISBN 0159503728	£17.95
Director's Guide	ISBN 0159503760	£ 8.25

'Children's Catechumenate' is a preparation programme for children being initiated into the Catholic Church. There are three levels: Primary, intermediate and upper, each of which has a student text.

The Director's guide includes background material on the Sacraments of Initiation for Children and lesson plans for each level, as well as preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for Children who have already been baptised, but are out of sequence with the other sacraments.

Christian Initiation of Older Children

Sandra Figgess

St. Paul's (UK) 1990 ISBN 0-85439-340-4

This updated edition of preparing older children for Baptism prepares non-baptised children of catechetical age to become full members of the Church. Good overview and background reading with material that can be used in sessions you prepare yourself.

Journey of Faith for Children

Francine M. O'Connor

Liguori Press

Leader's Guide ISBN 0-7648-0160-0

Children's Handouts (Folded A3 sheet)

Good handouts for children to keep with good activities.

Children's Catechumenate from Celebrating the Sacraments Series

Philip J. McBrien

Resource Publications Inc. ISBN 0-89390-413-9

This book, written especially for catechists, provides critical background on all the initiation rites and their applications to prepare children for each rite and to help them unpack the experience afterwards. The second part of the book is aimed at drawing parents into the process. Guidelines for interviews with parents and reproducible handouts for families make this a most practical resource.

A Child's Journey: The Christian Initiation of Children

Rita Burns Senseman

St. Anthony Messenger Press ISBN 0-86716-263-3

When implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in parishes, people always find new challenges and questions when they adapt the rite to children of catechetical age.

This comprehensive book examines the special issues of initiation of children and offers solid, practical approaches for dealing with those issues.

Rita Burns Senseman describes the journey of a child's conversion based on her own experience as a parish catechist. She also discusses the liturgical rites and process of liturgical catechesis for the initiation process, providing stories of conversion and catechesis and using sample sessions to illustrate her points.