

# First Holy Communion Parents Booklet



Loving God,

We thank You for the gift of our children who bring so much love and light to our lives. We are grateful for this opportunity to nurture and further grow our child's faith. Each day, through word and deed, help us to lead by genuine example. May we teach our child to seek you, to know you and to love you.



Be with our children as they prepare this year to encounter you more deeply in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Amen

Your child is such a gift and you know this most of all. You have held them in your arms; you have enjoyed their earliest attempts to walk, to dance, to climb, to learn. You have delighted in their developing sense of humour and in their personality. You love them and they are a daily reminder of the joyful gift of life itself!

Passing on the Church's faith in the love of God and the values taught to us by Jesus Christ, are among the most important things you can do as a parent. Sharing the faith with your child, helps them to become the person that God has created them to be. The home is the primary place where faith is cultivated. Parents are their child's primary example of how to live as a Christian and you remain instrumental to your child's spiritual formation throughout life. As expressed in the words of every baptismal liturgy, the handing on of the faith is primarily the responsibility of parents and you are described as the first and best teachers of your children in the ways of faith.

You are not alone in this role - you have the parish to guide, support and encourage you.

May God bless you and your family abundantly at this special time in your child's faith journey.

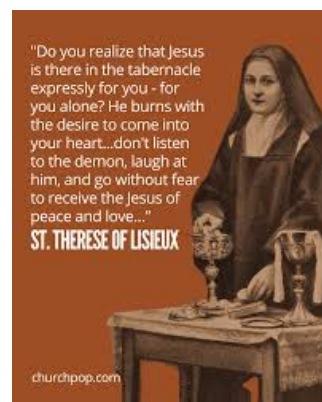
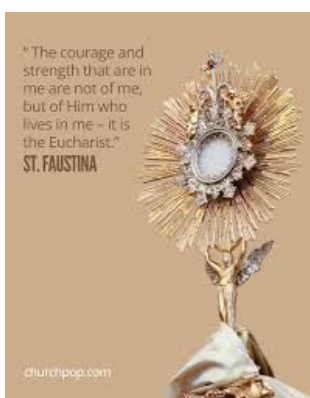
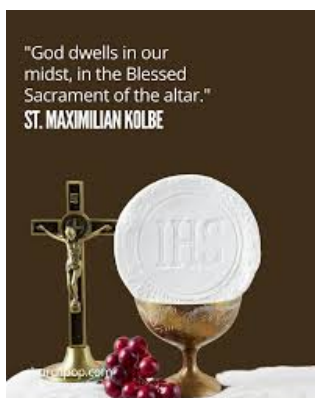
Fr Michael Copps

### **The Eucharist: What We Believe**

The Mass is a memorial of the sacrifice Jesus offered God the Father at the Last Supper. During that meal, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and told his followers, "Do this in memory of Me." Although the Eucharist is a mystery, we, as Catholics, accept in faith the fact that bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus, because Jesus told us this is so.

"The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine." The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; it is Jesus himself (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324, 1374).

The Eucharist is Jesus' true presence here on earth. At Mass, we come together as a community, the Body of Christ, to worship and to receive His presence into ourselves.



### **Why does the Eucharist hold such a central place in Catholic life?**

It was the gift which Jesus gave his disciples on his last evening with them before he died - a gift in which all he had tried to teach them was brought together. The Eucharist unites in a single celebration the essential elements of the Catholic faith. In it we recall what God has revealed to us through history as we listen to the readings (we call this part of the Mass 'the Liturgy of the Word'). Then in the central part of the Mass ('the Liturgy of the Eucharist') we remember and make present, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We actually receive Jesus - physically and spiritually - when we receive the consecrated bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ. Also, when we celebrate the Eucharist, we are united across time and space with all the Saints, who are also praising God in heaven.

### **Is Jesus present in the Eucharist?**

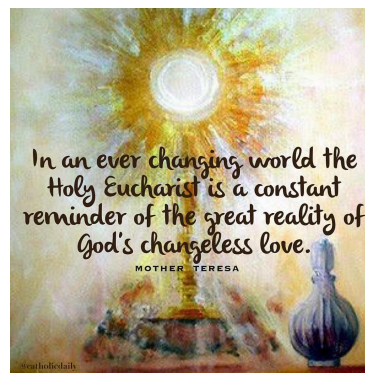
We cannot see Jesus, but there are many things in life we do not see, however, they exist and are essential. For example: We do not see an electric current, yet we see that it exists. We do not see our

reason, yet we have reason. We do not see the very deepest things, those that really sustain life and the world, but we can see and feel their effects. So it is with the Risen Lord: We do not see him with our eyes, but we see that wherever Jesus is a greater capacity for peace, for reconciliation and for love is created. Therefore, we do not see the Lord himself, but we see the effects of the Lord and can know that Jesus is present.

We believe is that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in four ways: (1) In the assembled people of God (2) In the person of the presider – the priest; (3) In the Word of God (Scripture); (4) In the Eucharistic species – the bread and wine that become the Body and Blood of Christ, the most intense mode of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. When we receive these sacred elements, we become even more the Body of Christ. As St. Augustine reminded the Church in the 4th-5th centuries, 'We become... what we eat and drink.' This means that we become Christ present, and thus the cycle begins again: Christ present in the gathered assembly, in the minister, in the Word of God proclaimed, and in the Eucharist broken and shared.

### **Why do people make the Sacrament of Reconciliation before their First Holy Communion?**

To prepare our hearts and minds for receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, it is important to examine our conscience and to say sorry for our sins and be reconciled to God. This is why it is important to make the sacrament of Reconciliation first. At the beginning of Mass, we also examine our conscience in the Penitential Rite before meeting Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.



### **What is the meaning behind what happens at the Eucharist or Holy Mass?**

Every Eucharist takes us back to its origins at the Last Supper. In this sense we transcend time. We are there with Jesus Christ as we hear once again his words spoken, 'This is my body ... This is my blood.' As the priest repeats these words, by the desire of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, bread and wine become Jesus's body and blood. Jesus offered himself on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the world. His resurrection is a sign that God in Christ has overcome sin and death. By our communion we share in this victory. We ask that his life may make itself known in our life, and that his love may be shown in our love.

### **How does this sacrament have an impact on Christian life?**

Whenever we celebrate the sacraments, we come into contact with Christ – we encounter Christ the Redeemer. It is the same at Mass; we encounter Christ in the Word of God and in the Real Presence of the Eucharist. We are united with God through Christ but we must be willing to grow spiritually to find peace. Jesus forgave many people like Zacchaeus, Peter, the tax collector... He told them their sins were forgiven and to go in peace and sin no more. They changed their ways and became better people, and so they were filled with great peace and strength of faith. In the same way, the Eucharist can change and heal us, having a great impact on our Christian life and the lives of others.

### **How does the Eucharist affect our relationship with Jesus?**

In Mass and in Eucharistic Adoration, where we pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament, we become closer to Jesus who loves us. This encounter with Christ has the power to strengthen and nourish us spiritually. Just as we hear in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20), the Word of God can take root in the rich soil of our hearts and produce a wonderful harvest, fruit that will last. That's why it's important when we come to celebrate Mass that we are attentive and actively engaged with the prayer that is taking place. It has been said that when we receive the Eucharist, 'we become what we receive'. That is to say, we become more fully the Body of Christ. This not only affects our unity with Jesus, but brings us into a closer relationship with others.

### **How can our lives be transformed by living out the Eucharist?**

Our lives can be transformed by living out the Eucharist when we follow Jesus' instruction that he gave us at the first Eucharist on Maundy Thursday. He told us 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (Jn 13:34). We can do this by remembering and living out Jesus' teaching and example: By helping our neighbours materially and physically like feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, burying the dead and giving to those in need. These actions are known as the corporal works of mercy and it is our mission and the mission of the universal Church to make Christ's love and mercy known. This is our Catholic faith and we profess this by saying the Nicene Creed at Mass on Sunday: 'I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church'. Living and loving as Jesus did will transform our lives. Those present at Mass are sent out to claim the Good News: that God is with us in Jesus, that we are loved and forgiven, and that following Jesus can bring true happiness, peace and salvation.

