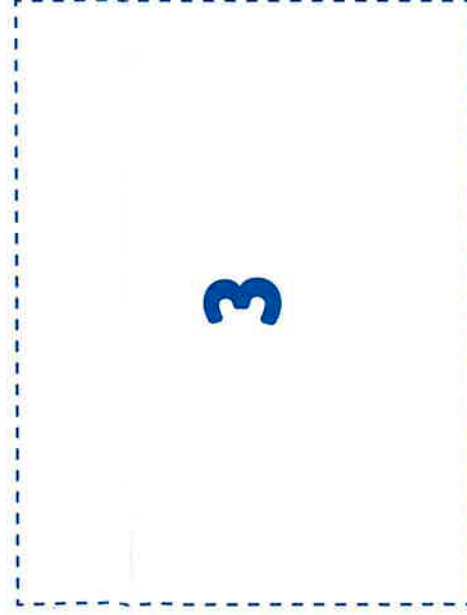
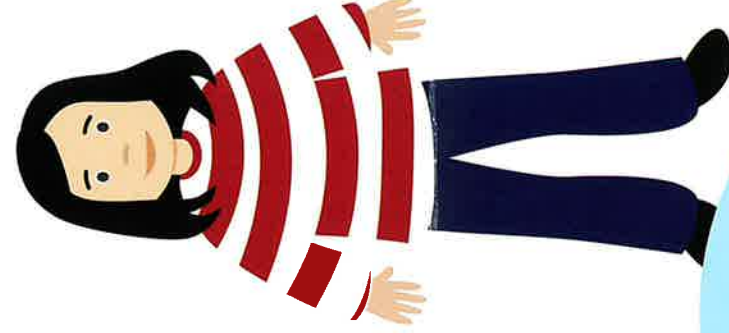
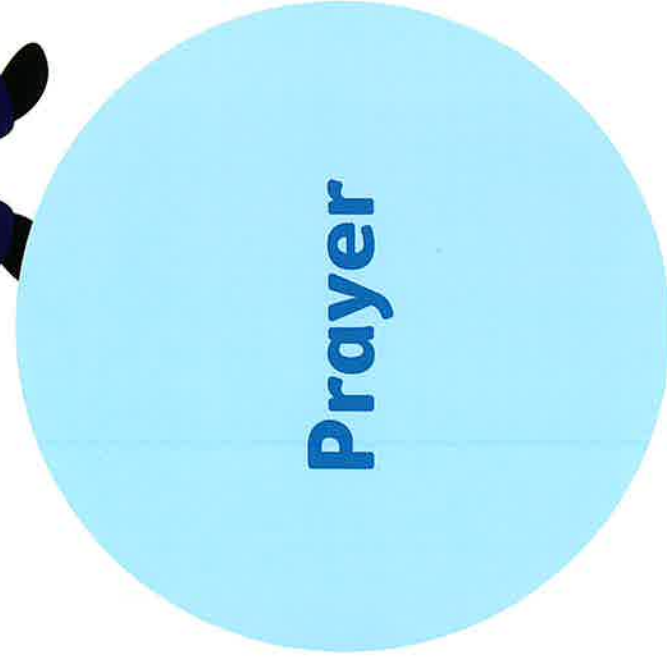
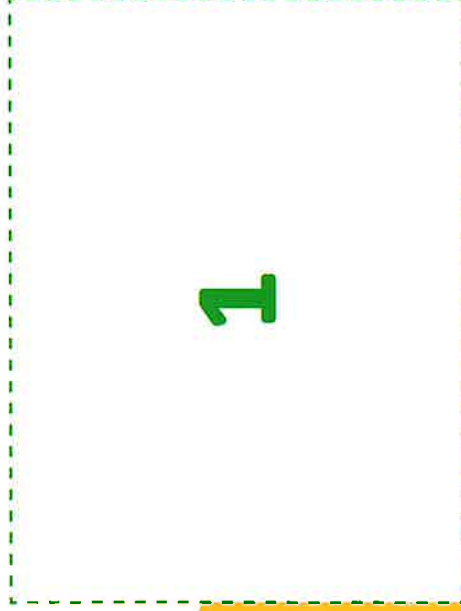
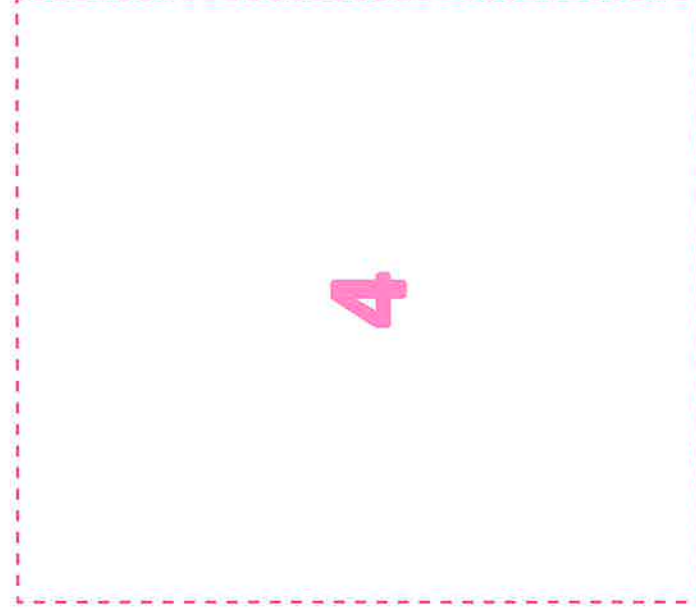
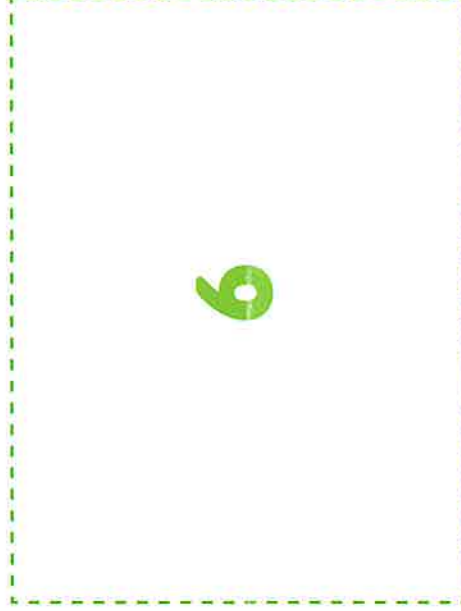
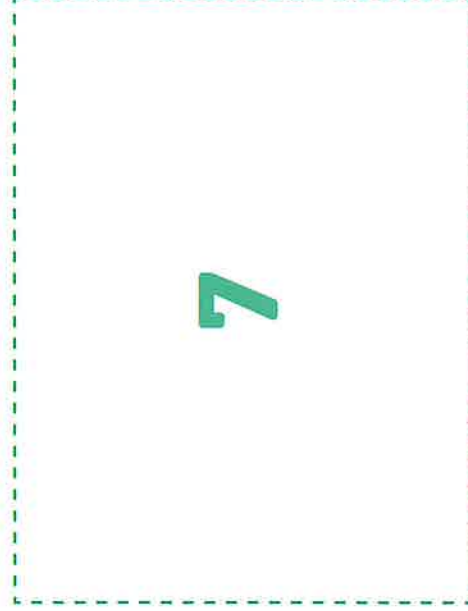
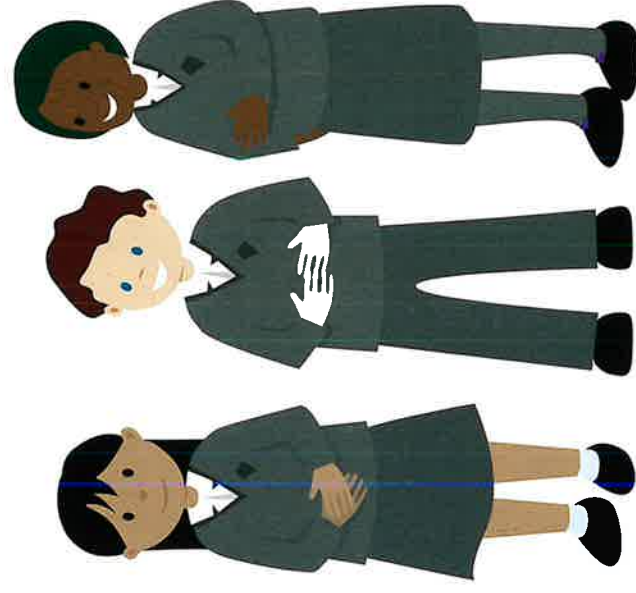
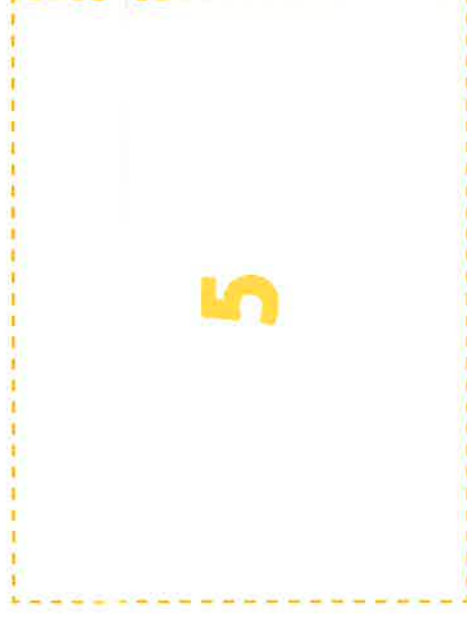
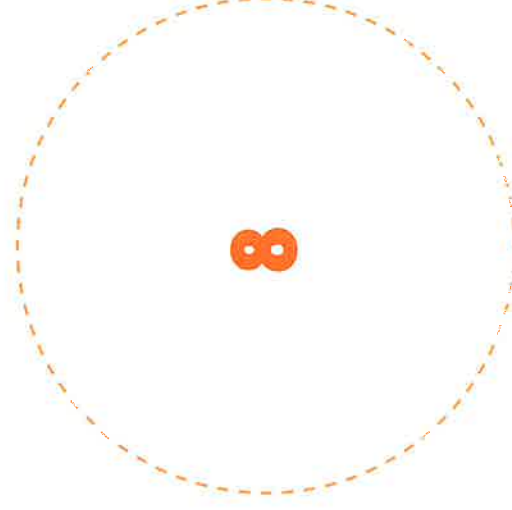
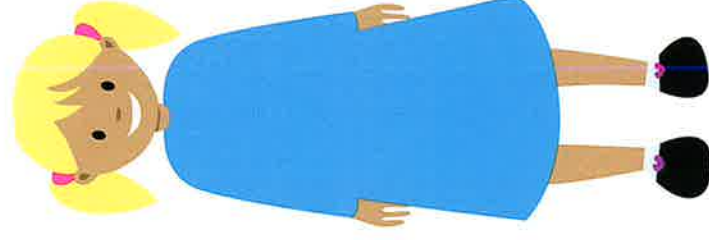
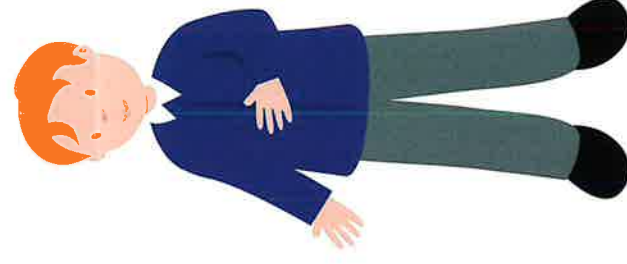




POSTER





With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

If there is a Prayer Space in your child's classroom, encourage them to write a prayer on a piece of paper and they can ask their teacher if they may put it in their classroom Prayer Space. Ask your child about the times that they pray in school each day – perhaps they pray first thing in the morning, before they eat, or before they go home. Encourage them to pray some of those prayers at home too.

IN THE PARISH

Go to the church with your child and help them to light a candle. Then use your hands to pray the Five Finger Prayer together.



AT HOME



As your child prepares to receive Holy Communion for the first time, try to pray the *Our Father* together every day. Your child could cut out and paste the *Our Father* on to the space marked 'Prayer' on the *Grow in Love* poster.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Parents'/Guardians' Page

'You pray for the hungry. Then you go feed them. That's how prayer works.' – Pope Francis

A Question of Faith

Why does the Church ask us to go to Mass every week? Can't we just pray to God by ourselves?

While personal prayer certainly helps us to build our relationship with God, the Church believes that gathering to pray with the community of faith is also a really important way to develop our relationship with God and with one another. At Mass we listen to the Word of God and receive Holy Communion. This helps to nourish and strengthen our faith so that we can live our lives as Jesus asked us to.



Theme: Prayer

Hello again, boys and girls!

This month we would like to help you and your family to think about prayer and to pray together. Praying is a way of talking and listening to God or to Jesus. We can also pray to Mary and to any of the saints in heaven. The Gospels tell us that Jesus prayed a lot, especially when he faced important decisions.

Sometimes we pray using an exact set of words, like the *Hail Mary* or the *Our Father*. These are known as formal prayers, and we can say them alone or with others. At other times we pray using our own words. We can say, for example, 'Loving God, please bless Granny because she's sick'. We can also pray using our 'inside voice': the voice inside our head that only God can hear. Remember, God always listens to our prayers, even when we don't speak out loud.

Prayer helps us to get to know and love God better. As you prepare to receive Jesus in Holy Communion, maybe you and your family can spend a little extra time praying together. You will find some ideas about how you might do that in this newsletter.



This Month's Focus: Prayer

The Gospels tell us that Jesus spent a lot of time praying to his Father in heaven. Sometimes Jesus prayed on his own and sometimes he prayed with other people.



One day Jesus went off on his own to pray. While he was gone, his friends started to wonder about what words Jesus used when he prayed. So, when Jesus came back, they asked him to teach them to pray, and to tell them what words they should say. Jesus then taught them to say the prayer that we call the *Our Father*.

The *Our Father* that we pray today is the very same prayer that Jesus taught his followers more than two thousand years ago. You may say it at home with your family or with your class in school. We also pray the *Our Father* every time we go to Mass.



One day, some people asked Pope Francis to tell them how to pray. He told them that one way they could pray was by using their hands. He called it the Five Finger Prayer. This is how to pray the Five Finger Prayer:

1. Join your hands as if you are praying. Look at your hands. Notice that the finger nearest to you is the thumb. The thumb can remind you to pray for **those who are closest to you**, your family and your friends. Begin by praying for them.
2. The next finger is called your index finger. This finger is used for pointing. Use this finger to remind you to pray for **your parents, your teachers and those who guide you through life**. You can also pray for leaders in your clubs and the priests in your parish.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. This finger can remind you to pray for **the President of our country, our leaders in the Government, and all other leaders in the world** who make decisions.
4. The fourth finger is called the ring finger. Scientists tell us that this is the weakest of all our fingers. This finger can remind you to pray for **those who are weak or sick or suffering in any way in our world**.
5. The next finger is the smallest finger. Use this finger to remind you to pray for **yourself**. We leave the prayers for ourselves until last, but we don't forget them!



In the space on the next page, trace around your hand. Inside the outline of each of your fingers, name the different people that you would pray for using Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer.



With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

The first theme in the *Grow in Love* programme this year focuses on how, on the day of our Baptism, we become followers of Jesus. You can support your child's learning by telling them as many details as you can about their Baptism ceremony, and by showing them items such as their baptismal candle, certificate and gown. Ask your child to tell you about the ways they can now show that they are a follower of Jesus.



IN THE PARISH

Use this newsletter to help your child to become familiar with the church building. This month, make a visit to the church at a time when it is quiet and do some of the things suggested on page 2.

AT HOME

Set up a Prayer Space in your child's bedroom or in another appropriate place in your home. A Prayer Space is just a small area containing some visual reminders of your faith, for example, a candle, a cross, a Bible, etc. Every month, a new item for the Prayer Space will be suggested and you will be given a prayer to say with your child. These prayers may be cut out and pasted on to the *Grow in Love* poster that you received with this newsletter. This poster may be kept in or near your child's Prayer Space. Begin this month with the *Night Prayer*, which your child should paste on to space no. 1.

Night Prayer

God, our Father, I come to say
Thank you for your love today.
Thank you for my family,
And all the friends you give to me.
Guard me in the dark of night,
And in the morning send your light.
Amen.

Parents'/Guardians' Page

Welcome to the *Grow in Love* parish newsletter, a resource designed specifically for families whose children are preparing to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) and Eucharist (Holy Communion) for the first time. The best way to prepare children for the sacraments is for home, school and parish to work together. This year we invite you to enter into this partnership in the following ways:



At Home: You are your child's first and most important teacher, and your support and example are vitally important for your child's growth in faith. We therefore encourage you to pray with your child, to bring him/her to Mass regularly, and to teach him/her about God's love and care for us.

In the Parish: In our parish, children are not only welcome, they are also vital and valued members of the community, especially when they are preparing to celebrate one of the sacraments for the first time. We know that family life is busy, but we want to invite and encourage as many families as possible to join with us in celebrating the Mass in our parish every week.

At School: If your child attends a Catholic school, he/she will spend some time every day praying to God and learning how to live as a follower of Jesus, using a programme called *Grow in Love*. We encourage you to ask your child what he/she has learned from *Grow in Love*. There is a special 'At Home' page in the *Grow in Love* children's book for each week of the school year, where you will find an activity for you to do with your child, something to chat about, and a prayer to say together. If your child attends a school other than a Catholic school, he/she will have Religious Education classes outside of school hours. All children are welcome to take part in our parish preparation for First Holy Communion.



Theme: Welcome!

Welcome, boys and girls!

This is a very special year for you because you are going to receive Holy Communion for the first time.

On the day that you were baptised, you became a follower of Jesus and a member of the family of the Church. When you receive Holy Communion, you will be invited to come even closer to Jesus.

As well as learning from the *Grow in Love* programme in school with your teacher and at home with your parents, you will also receive one of these *Grow in Love* parish newsletters each month. In them, you will find lots of interesting information and activities. All of these will help you to know and love Jesus and to be more like him.

Congratulations! This is the start of a very special journey for you.



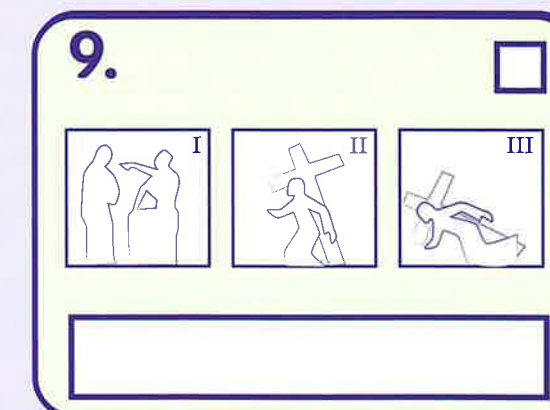
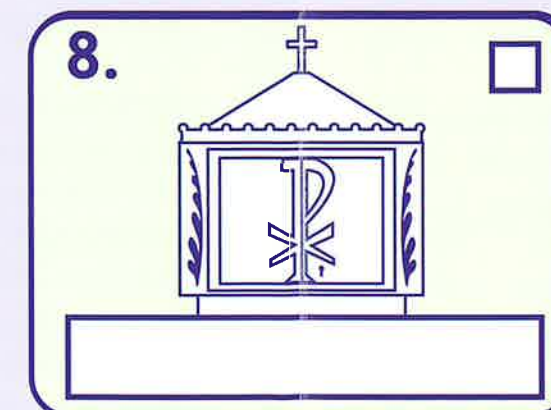
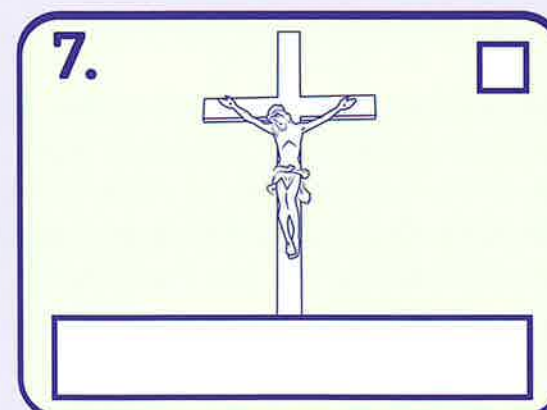
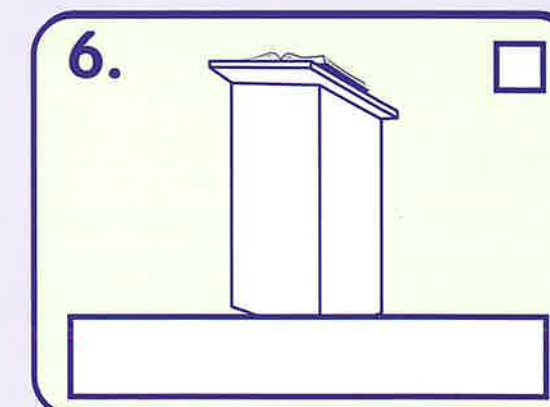
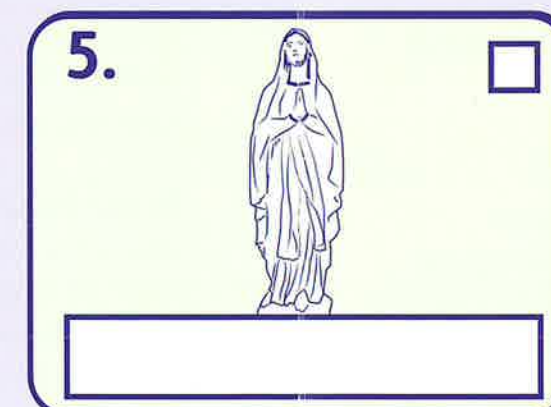
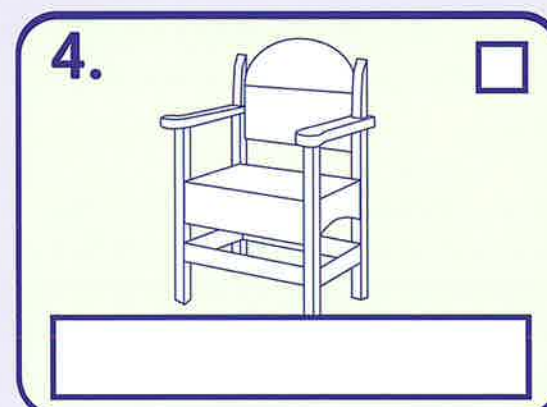
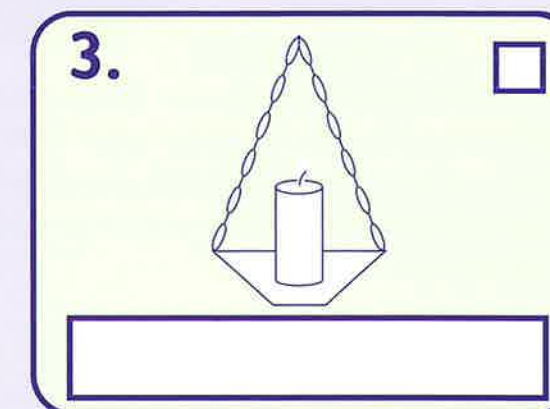
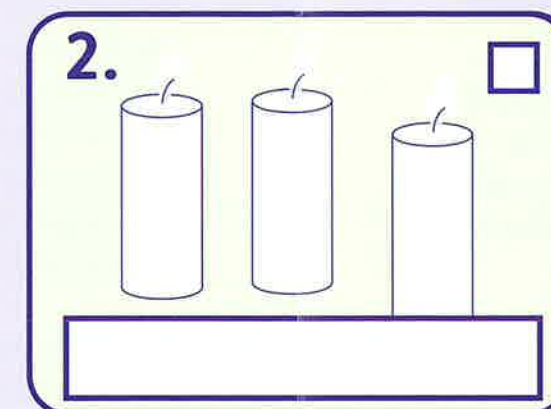
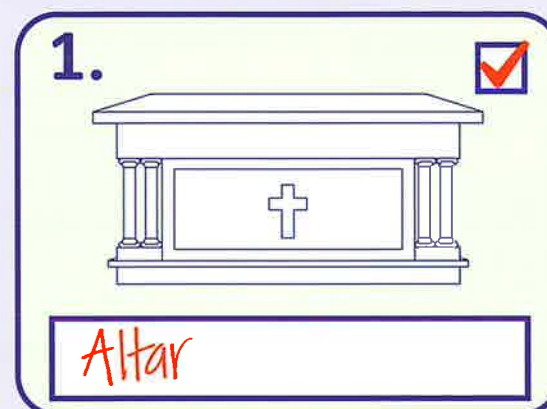
This Month's Focus: The Church

The church is a special place because it is where the members of the family of the Church gather together to pray and celebrate Mass. There are special things in the church. Make a visit to the church with your family at a time when it is quiet and do some of these things:

- Look at the stained-glass windows. Try to work out what they show.
- Visit the baptismal font. Ask your family to tell you about the day you were baptised.
- Look at the statues. How many of the people do you recognise?
- With help from a grown-up, light a candle and say a prayer.
- Look at the Stations of the Cross and talk about the story of Jesus' death.
- See if you can find a confessional or reconciliation room. This may be where you will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- With help from a grown-up, bow or genuflect in front of the tabernacle to show that you know this is a very special part of the church.



Use the words in the Word Bank to label the things you can see in the church. See if you can find each of these things in your own church. Tick the box when you do.



Word Bank

~~Altar~~
Ambo
Candles

Stations of the Cross
Statue of Mary
Priest's chair

Sanctuary Lamp
Crucifix
Tabernacle

With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

This month the children learn about the Rosary. They will also spend some time recalling and building on what they already know about Jesus. He was a healer, a helper and a friend to those in need. Jesus also taught his followers the Law of Love: 'Love one another as I have loved you'. You can support your child's learning by chatting about the ways in which your child can follow the Law of Love at home, in school and in the community.

IN THE PARISH

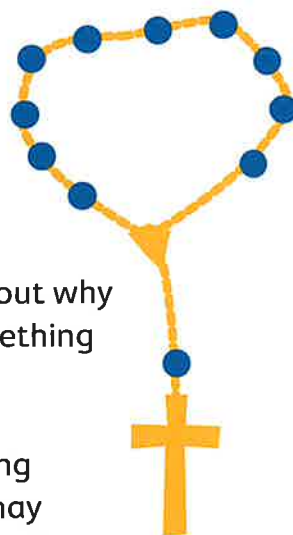
October is Mission Awareness Month in Ireland, so our parish family will be praying in a particular way during October for all those who leave their homes and families to go and share the Good News of the Gospel with other people. We call these people missionaries. Remember them in your prayers in a particular way this month.

We, too, can be missionaries, because we can also bring the Good News of God's love to others. We don't even need to go abroad! We can do it by looking out for a neighbour, volunteering in the local community or helping people in need whenever we can.

AT HOME

Put some rosary beads in your child's Prayer Space. Use the activities on this newsletter to talk to him/her about the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. If you have a children's Bible, you can read the stories in full together, perhaps one each night before bed. Chat with your child about why each story is 'joyful'. Share a story of something 'joyful' that happened this week.

Try to give some time this month to praying parts of the Rosary with your child. You may like to start by praying one *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary* and one *Glory Be to the Father* each day. Encourage your child to cut out the description of the Rosary on page 6 and paste it on to space no. 2 on the *Grow in Love* poster.



Parents'/Guardians' Page

Mary was close to God and she was brave – she needed to be! She was a young Jewish woman who lived in the town of Nazareth and was engaged to Joseph. When the angel came to visit her and invite her to become the mother of Jesus, she was frightened. Despite not knowing fully what this would mean for her life, she answered 'yes' to God's invitation. She could have said 'no', but she trusted in God and believed in God's ability to do the impossible. Her 'yes' changed history.

Mary's cooperation with God's dream is a model for all Christians. The Church has honoured Mary through the centuries – as the Mother of God, but also as our Mother. Just as Mary cared for Jesus, she also cares for the whole of the human family. She wants people to come to know and love her son, and to live in the way that he modelled for us.



A Question of Faith

Why do we bless ourselves with holy water before we enter a church?

We bless ourselves with holy water before we enter a church as a reminder of our Baptism. On the day of our Baptism we became followers of Jesus and members of the Catholic Church. We wore a white garment, the priest made the sign of the cross on our forehead, we were anointed with the oil of chrism, and holy water was poured on our head. When we bless ourselves with holy water each time we go to Mass, we can remember the moment when we became a part of the family of God and the family of the Church.

The Rosary

1. Begin with the *Sign of the Cross*.
2. First, pray one *Our Father*.
3. Then pray the *Hail Mary* ten times.
4. Finish by praying the *Glory Be to the Father*.
5. Repeat all of this five times, thinking of the things that happened in the life of Jesus and Mary.



2

Theme: The Rosary

Hello again, boys and girls!

During the month of October, many people make a special effort to pray a prayer called the Rosary. The Rosary is a very old prayer. It helps us to think about different moments in the life of Jesus and his mother Mary. Praying the Rosary is like looking at a photo album of Jesus' life. Some of the things that happened to Jesus were happy, or joyful, and some of them were sad, or sorrowful. Can you think of any joyful or sorrowful things that happened in the life of Jesus?

In this month's *Grow in Love* parish newsletter you will learn more about the joyful things that happened to Mary and Jesus. We know that Mary loves and cares for us just like she loved and cared for Jesus. We can try every day to be kind and generous and loving, just like Mary was.

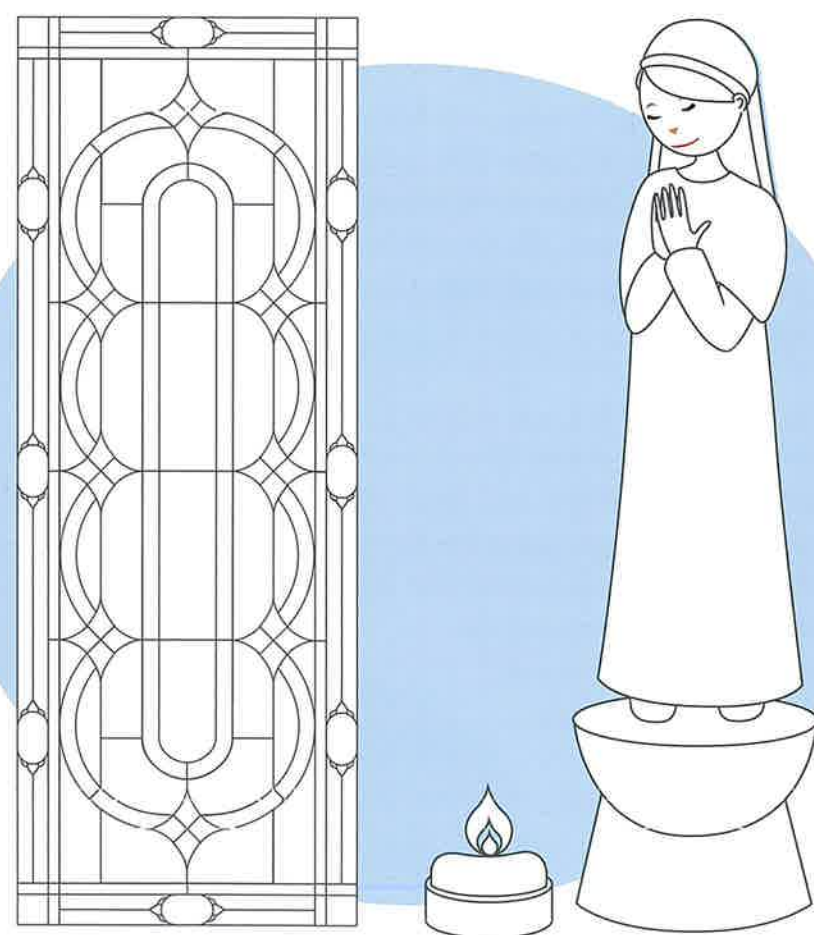


This Month's Focus: Mary and the Rosary

In many ways, Mary was an ordinary girl. She grew up in a little town called Nazareth with her parents Anna and Joachim. But there was something very special about Mary too. God chose Mary to be the mother of his Son, Jesus. We can ask Mary to pray for us and to help us to be faithful followers of Jesus.

In the church building, there are many things that help us to honour Mary. Can you find each of the items shown below in your church? Colour them in and tick them when you see them.

- ☐ Stained-glass window
- ☐ Statue of Mary with a candle shrine



The joyful moments in the life of Jesus and his mother, Mary, are called the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Unscramble the words below to read the full name of each Joyful Mystery.

Word Bank

The Finding in the Temple
The Presentation The Annunciation
The Birth of Our Lord The Visitation



HET NICNAONTIUNA



EHT TINAIVTSIO



TEH TIRHB FO RUO DLRO



ETH ESPNEOARTINT



HTE GDINFNI NI TEH EMETLP

With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

After mid-term break, the children will learn about the Feast of All Saints (1 November) and the Feast of All Souls (2 November). They will also hear about the lives of saints like St Vincent de Paul, and they will be encouraged to imitate these saints in their own lives.

IN THE PARISH

During the month of November, many parishes have rituals to remember those who have died, for example a Book of Remembrance or Altar List of the Dead, a Blessing of the Graves Liturgy or a special Mass. Take part in one of these activities with your family if you can. You might also take your child to visit a family grave during the month of November. While there, talk about your favourite memory of the person who has died. Say a prayer with your child.

AT HOME

Place a memorial card or a picture of someone your child knows who has died in his/her Prayer Space. Include that person in your morning or night-time prayer routine this month. You may like to use the following prayer, which your child could cut out and paste on to space no. 3 on the *Grow in Love* poster.



We remember

Eternal rest grant unto them,
O Lord.
May they rest in peace.
Amen.

Parents'/Guardians' Page

In John's Gospel we read that Jesus told his disciples:

'There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am.' (John 14:2, 3)

Jesus assures us that we are all invited to be with him forever in heaven.

A Question of Faith

What does 'Amen' mean and why do we say it so much throughout the Mass?

The word 'Amen' is a Hebrew word that can be translated as 'so be it' or 'it is so'. We say 'Amen' at the conclusion of prayers to show that we agree with what has just been said. For example, when we receive Holy Communion, the priest or minister of the Eucharist says, 'The Body of Christ'. We respond by saying 'Amen' to show that we know and believe that what we have received is not ordinary bread, but the Body of Christ.



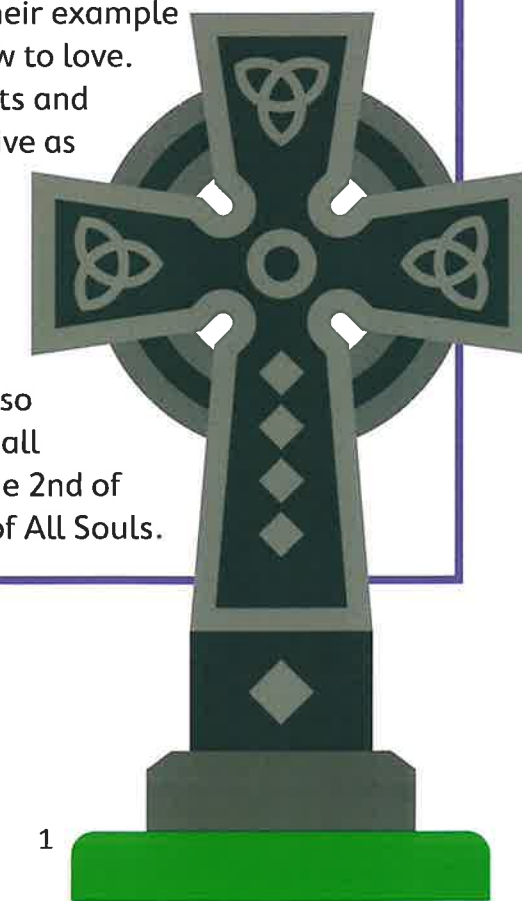
Theme: In November, We Remember

Hello again, boys and girls!

During the month of November we remember in a special way those who have died, and we pray for them.

The 1st of November is the Feast of All Saints. On this day we remember all the saints who live at home with God in heaven. Saints are people who showed love for God and love for others during their lives on earth. We learn from their example how to live well and how to love. We can pray to the saints and ask them to help us to live as Jesus taught us.

During the month of November, but in a special way on the 2nd of November, we also remember and pray for all those who have died. The 2nd of November is the Feast of All Souls.



This Month's Focus: All Saints, All Souls

Read this poem with your family.

All Saints, All Souls

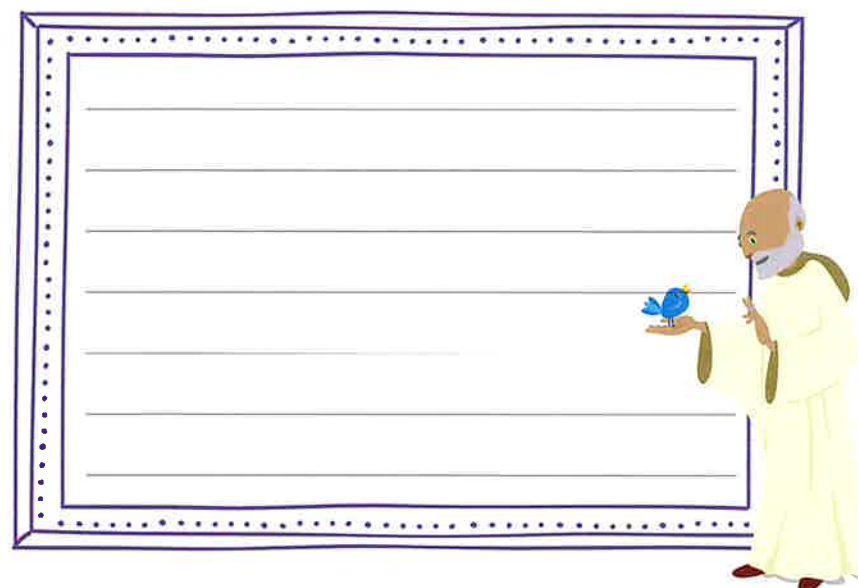
Remember those
Who kept the faith
Who always turned to pray,
Who showed the love of Jesus
In their lives from day to day.

Remember those
This special time
Who live with God above,
All Saints, All Souls,
And all our own,
Who live with God in love.

Christy Kenneally



How many saints can you name? Make a list here.



Read about each of the following saints.

St Patrick

When was a boy, he was kidnapped and taken to . Patrick's job was to mind . He to God every night and every day. Finally, managed to escape home. But he missed and so some years later he went back there. He told the people about God's for them.

St Brigid

was a very kind person. She was especially kind to who were in need. She wanted to show them that she them, and that God them too. Soon, many other came to work with Brigid. She founded a convent in County Kildare.

St Thérèse of Lisieux

was a nun who lived with other in a convent. They spent a lot of time . Thérèse also spent time and doing other jobs in the convent. Thérèse did all of her jobs with great . Doing small things with great is what Thérèse called her 'little way'.

St Vincent de Paul and St Louise

was a priest who lived in France. He helped who were living in situations of poverty. He encouraged who had plenty to share some of what they had with who were in need. By doing this, was living as taught. One of the people who chose to help with his work was a woman called Louise.

To Do:

Is your school, parish church or local GAA club named after a saint? If so, do you know anything about him/her? Try to find out more about them.



With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

As well as focusing on the Christmas story, *Grow in Love* lessons this month will also help the children to recall the story of John the Baptist and how he encouraged the people to prepare for Jesus' coming. Throughout the month of December, ask your child what he/she is learning about the birth of Jesus. Encourage him/her to share any artwork, songs/carols, poems, etc. that the children are doing or learning in school.



IN THE PARISH

Bring your family to visit the crib in the church. When you are there, invite the child preparing for Holy Communion to tell the Christmas story to you or to the other children in the family.

AT HOME

When decorating your home for Christmas, place the crib in a prominent place and use the following prayer to bless it. Encourage your child to cut out the prayer and paste it on to space no. 4 on the *Grow in Love* poster.

Loving God,
bless this crib and all who
look upon it.
May it remind us that Jesus was
born into a family
who didn't have very much to share
except their love for one another.
May it help us to keep you at
the centre of our
Christmas celebrations.
And may the joy and peace
brought to the world by Jesus
be in our home at this time
and always.
Amen.

Parents'/Guardians' Page

In 1969 the world held its breath. In living rooms, hotels and even at shop windows all over the globe, people huddled around television sets to witness something amazing taking place. Finally, they saw what they never would have believed possible. They saw Neil Armstrong climb down the steps of the lunar space module and walk on the moon. It was a truly historic moment.

Almost two thousand years before that, an even more momentous event took place. No one noticed except a few shepherds and three Eastern gentlemen, but it was an event that changed the nature of human history for ever. In a stable on a dark and lonely hillside outside the city of Bethlehem, a baby boy was born. God had come on earth as a human being.

A Question of Faith

Why do we stand when the Gospel is being read at Mass?

We stand for the Gospel to show our respect for it. The Gospels are the four books in the Bible that tell us about Jesus. Jesus speaks to us through the Gospels. The Gospels teach us how to love God and one another.



Theme: Advent

Hello again, boys and girls!

About this time every year, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. This special time of preparation is called Advent. There are lots of things we can do during Advent to prepare for Christmas.



We can light the candles on our Advent wreath each week.



We can count down the days until Christmas on our Advent calendar.



We can prepare the Christmas crib.



We can put up our Christmas decorations.



We can learn Christmas carols.



We can pray to God to help us to welcome Jesus into our heart.

Use this Advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas. Tick the box in each activity as you complete it.

1

Tell your family the story of how Mary found out she was going to have a baby

☐

2

Say 'thank you' to God for all the people who are helping you prepare for your First Holy Communion

☐

3

Leave out some food for the birds


☐

4

Share something you have with someone who needs it

☐

5

Visit the church and ask an adult to help you light a candle


☐

6

Feast of St Nicholas

Think of sharing some presents with children who do not get as many as you

☐

7

Bless your family with holy water


☐

8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Pray the *Hail Mary* today

☐

9

Play with someone who is sometimes left out

☐

10

Make a Christmas card for someone who helps in your school

☐

11

Phone your grandparents and tell them what you are doing to get ready for Christmas

☐

12

Read about Mary's visit to Elizabeth in the Bible


☐

13

Say a prayer for the people you know who have died


☐

14

Pick up any litter that you see today

☐

15

Draw a picture of Mary and Joseph getting ready for the new baby

☐

16

Give a hug to the people who take care of you at home

☐

17

Say 'I'm sorry' to someone you have hurt

☐

18

Remember to say *Grace Before Meals* today

☐

19

Put something you've used in the correct recycling bin today

☐

20

Ask how you can help to tidy your house

☐

21

Make a Christmas card for someone in your family

☐

22

Say a prayer for your godparents


☐

23

Add your favourite Christmas card to your Prayer Space

☐

24

Tell the Christmas story (*on the next page*) to your family


☐

The Christmas Story

Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor at the time when Mary was expecting her baby. He was in charge of the place where Mary and Joseph lived. He wanted to know how many people he was in charge of, so he sent a message to all the people to return to the places where they were from to be counted. Joseph's family was from Bethlehem, so Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem to register their names in that town.

While they were there, the time came for Jesus to be born, but there was no room at the inn. Mary and Joseph had to take shelter in a stable, and it was there that Jesus was born. Out on the hills around Bethlehem, some shepherds were minding their sheep when the sky above them was filled with the sound of angels singing 'Glory to God in the highest'. 'Go and see the new baby,' the angels told the shepherds. At that same moment, three wise men spotted a new star in the sky. They mounted their camels and followed it until they arrived at the stable where Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus were waiting for them.



With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated during the last week of January. The purpose of the week is to celebrate the work of the Catholic school and its place as part of the wider Catholic community. If your child attends a Catholic school, you can mark this week by:

- encouraging him/her to make a 'thank you' card for his/her teacher, principal or school chaplain;
- attending any of the services or gatherings organised this week in your school or parish, such as Grandparents' Day;
- reflecting on why you chose a Catholic school for your child, and sharing those thoughts with your child.

IN THE PARISH

Each child will have a bottle of water blessed at Mass this week. Invite him/her to use the holy water in some of the following ways during this first month of the New Year:

- Place holy water in a font beside the hall door and remind children to bless themselves as they leave in the morning.
- Bless the family car, bicycles and any other mode of transport, and say a prayer for safe travels.
- Share some of the holy water with someone who is sick.

AT HOME

Visit the church and show your child the baptismal font. Tell them about their Baptism. Share with your child why you wanted to have him/her baptised and explain that preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion are the next steps on his/her faith journey. Encourage your child to cut out the prayer on the next page and paste it on to space no. 5 on their *Grow in Love* poster.



Parents'/Guardians' Page

Baptism is an occasion to celebrate a new life and to welcome a child into the Christian community. This sacrament of welcome confers a new identity on the child or person being baptised. They are now a son or daughter of God, beginning a new life in association with Jesus. This new life is not lived alone. Rather, Baptism draws people into a community of believers, which we call the Church.

To be baptised is to be part of a faith community that shares a common belief and purpose in life, one that is focused on following Jesus more closely and trying to build a better world.

That community is a large, mixed, global group of people – native Irish and new Irish, Traveller and settled, gay and straight, well off and not so well off, Catholic and Protestant, and a whole lot more! Our Baptism call is lived out day by day, always deepening our relationship with others and with God.



A Question of Faith

Why do we make the Sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips and chest before we listen to the Gospel at Mass?

Making the Sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips and chest (over our heart) is a silent prayer. We are praying that we may know and understand the Word of God in our head, that we may speak it from our lips, and that we may love it with all our heart.

Loving God,
thank you for the gift of
the Holy Spirit
which you sent to me at Baptism.
Holy Spirit,
help me to live as a follower
of Jesus. Amen.



Theme: Baptism

Hello again, boys and girls!

January is the first month of the New Year. It is a time of new beginnings. In this month's *Grow in Love* parish newsletter we remember the beginning of your life as a follower of Jesus. You became a follower of Jesus when you were baptised. Here are some things you can do with your family to remember your Baptism:

- Place your baptismal candle in your Prayer Space.
- Ask to see the baptismal gown or shawl that you wore on the day of your Baptism.
- Talk to your family about the day of your Baptism. Remember to talk to your godparents and grandparents too.
- Before you go to bed each night this month, ask someone in your family to make the Sign of the Cross on your head. This was one of the first things that they did when they brought you to be baptised.
- On the day of your Baptism you became a follower of Jesus. Think about all the ways you can show that you are a follower of Jesus now that you are older.



This Month's Focus: Your Faith Journey

BAPTISM

When you were a baby, your parents/guardians and family made lots of choices for you. One of the choices that they made for you was that you would be part of God's family. They made this choice for you at your Baptism.

Do you know?

- What is the name of the priest who baptised you?
- Who was there on the day of your Baptism?
- Who chose your name, or names, and why?



FIRST RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)

Sometimes we make bad decisions. We say or do things that are wrong or that hurt others. When we do things like this, we are not living as Jesus asked us to. When we realise that we have done something wrong, we can say sorry to the people we have hurt, and we can also say sorry to God.

One very special way to say sorry to God is by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When you celebrate this sacrament for the first time, you will be able to tell God that you are sorry for the times when

FIRST COMMUNION (EUCCHARIST)

When you were baptised, you became a follower of Jesus and a member of the Church. The Church is one big family. Members of the Church gather together in a special



1

Your parents/guardians and family also chose godparents to help you to get to know God as you grow up. Your godparents love and care for you and want the best for you. They were present at your Baptism.

Do you know?

- Who are your godparents?
- Why were they chosen as your godparents?

Since your Baptism, your parents, family, teachers and priests have all been helping you to learn about God and to live as a follower of Jesus.

2

you didn't live as Jesus asked us to, and God will help you to try harder next time.

Say this prayer, which is called the *Act of Sorrow*, to get ready for your First Reconciliation:

O my God, I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins;
for not loving others and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.



3

way on Sundays, when we go to Mass. At Mass we listen to stories from the Bible and we share Holy Communion. Soon, you will share in Holy Communion for the first time. Fill in the certificate on the next page as you think about all the ways in which you are getting ready for this important moment.

Fill in the blanks in the certificate below and place it in your Prayer Space.

I will receive Holy Communion
for the first time on:

_____ (date)

in _____ Church.

These are some of the people who are
helping me to prepare:

At home: _____

In school: _____

In the parish: _____

I am hoping the following people will
be there to celebrate with me:

Signed: _____



With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

This month the children will hear the story about how Jesus spent forty days and nights in the desert, preparing to do the work that God had sent him to do. They will also learn about Lent, the forty-day season during which the followers of Jesus pray, fast, give up or abstain from things they like, and share what they have with others. Children usually celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) for the first time during Lent, so they will spend time talking about forgiveness and learning how to celebrate this sacrament.

IN THE PARISH

Visit the church and show your child the confessional or reconciliation room. In many parishes, children celebrate their First Reconciliation in the sanctuary area (close to the altar), but the Sacrament of Reconciliation may be celebrated in the confessional or reconciliation room at other times. Share your own memories of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where applicable. While in the church, notice some of the signs that show we are celebrating the season of Lent, such as the use of a purple altar cloth and the presence of a desert/wilderness space.

AT HOME

Look for examples of forgiveness in your family's daily life and chat with your child about these. Forgiveness is the basis on which we can talk to children about how and why we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each week, choose one of the following prayers to say with your child. You will find the words at the back of his/her *Grow in Love* book:

- *Act of Sorrow*
- *Prayer for Forgiveness*
- *Prayer after Forgiveness*
- *Confiteor* ('I confess to almighty God...')

Encourage your child to cut out the *Act of Sorrow* (on next page) and paste it on to space no. 6 on the *Grow in Love* poster.

Parents'/Guardians' Page

What will you give up or abstain from this Lent?

Give up hurtful words and say kind words instead.
Give up complaining and be filled with gratitude.
Give up anger and be filled with patience.
Give up worries and trust in God.
Give up bitterness and fill your heart with joy.
Give up selfishness and share with others.
Give up holding grudges and be forgiving.
Give up always talking so that you can listen to others instead.

Adapted from advice given by Pope Francis

A Question of Faith

Why do we share a 'sign of peace' with others before we receive Holy Communion?

Before we receive Holy Communion, the priest invites us to share a 'sign of peace' with each other. This 'sign of peace' is usually a handshake, but we could also share a hug, a kiss or even a high five! (During Covid-19, people will just exchange a few words.) We are invited to do this to show in a simple way that we are at peace with our family and friends before we receive Jesus in Holy Communion. It makes sense that we are at peace with one another before we welcome Jesus into our hearts.



Act of Sorrow

O my God, I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins;
for not loving others
and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus and not sin
again. Amen.



Theme: Reconciliation

Hello again, boys and girls!

Every year, followers of Jesus spend some time remembering how Jesus went into the desert to prepare for the work that God had sent him to do on earth. We call this time Lent. During Lent, the followers of Jesus pray, fast, give up or abstain from things we like, and share what we have with others, especially with those who are in need.

We also use the time during Lent to think about things we have done that are wrong, and to say sorry. A very special way to say sorry to God is to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will do this for the first time during Lent this year. Inside this *Grow in Love* newsletter, you will learn more about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Your family, your teachers and your priests will help you to prepare for this important sacrament.





Zacchaeus

went to a called Jericho. A tax collector named Zacchaeus lived there. Zacchaeus was a greedy little man. Sometimes he cheated people by having them pay too much tax. Zacchaeus wanted to see , but he couldn't because of all the standing in front of him. So, Zacchaeus climbed up a . When saw Zacchaeus, he said, 'Hurry down! I'd like to eat with you this evening in your .

So, went to Zacchaeus' for dinner. Zacchaeus told that he was sorry for being greedy. told Zacchaeus that his sins were forgiven, and that he should try to start living in a new way – by God and being kind to other people.

Chat with your family about how Jesus treated Zacchaeus. Even though Zacchaeus had sinned, Jesus knew that he was sorry, and he gave him God's forgiveness. In the same way, God will forgive us for the times when we have made bad choices.

This Month's Focus: The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Sometimes we say or do things that are wrong or that hurt others. When we realise that we have done something wrong, we say sorry to the people we have hurt, and we also say sorry to God. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we say sorry for the times we didn't live as Jesus asked, and we celebrate God's forgiveness. This year is an important year for you, because you will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the very first time. These are the steps to be followed to celebrate the sacrament:

STEP ONE

Think about the times when you didn't show your love for God and for others. Think back over the last few days and weeks.

- Did you always tell the truth?
- Were you ever unkind to your brothers, sisters or friends?
- Were you lazy?
- Did you borrow anything without returning it?
- Did you share your things with others?
- Did you do as your teachers and family asked?

If you realise there is something that you are sorry for, it's time for the second step.



STEP TWO

Talk to the priest about what you want to say sorry to God for. This is called a 'confession'. Explain in your own words what you are sorry for and that you will try your very best from now on to live as a friend of Jesus.



STEP THREE

After you have told the priest about the times when you did not live as Jesus asked, he might have a chat with you about some of the things that you said to him. Then he will give you something to do to show that you are sorry and that you want to try harder to live like Jesus. We call this a penance.



STEP FOUR

Next, the priest will ask you to say a prayer called the *Act of Sorrow*. Then he will say the words by which you are forgiven. This is called Absolution. It shows us that God has forgiven us and that God believes we are ready to begin again.



STEP FIVE

Finally, you must try again to live as Jesus asked, by loving God and loving other people. You can do this by saying sorry to anyone whom you have hurt, or by making up with people you have been fighting with. You can also do this by sharing what you have, by being kind and by including others. That is how people will know that you are a follower of Jesus.



With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

This year, in preparation for Holy Communion, children focus on learning about the Last Supper, and on the relationship between it and the Mass that we celebrate today. Ask your child to tell you what happened at the Last Supper and chat about how the priest repeats over

the bread and wine at Mass the words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper. The children will also hear the story of Jesus' betrayal by Judas and his denial by Peter before his death. The Resurrection story is the climax of the Holy Week and Easter lessons.



IN THE PARISH

Consider attending some of the Easter ceremonies with your family, and help your child to retell the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. After Mass on Easter Sunday, encourage your child to make a 'Happy Easter' card for someone in your family. On it, they could draw pictures of the empty tomb and of the Risen Jesus.



AT HOME

Invite your child to make a simple cross, using two strips of paper or card, and place it in their Prayer Space. They could also cut out the prayer shown below – which is a prayer from the Mass – and paste it on to space no. 7 on the *Grow in Love* poster.

Mystery of Faith

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

Parents'/Guardians' Page

All of the drama and emotion of life is evident in the Easter Week story. Jesus' betrayal, suffering and execution reflect the very worst of what human beings can do to each other. Jesus was an innocent man who was put to death because of the message he preached and the way he lived. He told people the Good News of God's love for all and of God's promise of salvation and eternal life.

But Jesus' death was not the end. God's plan was to end the suffering in the world and to replace it with love, freedom and equality for all. This was made possible by Jesus' rising from the dead. For those who believe in the Resurrection, there is always hope. Not a 'wishful thinking' kind of hope, which denies the struggles of everyday living, but rather a firm and certain belief that, in the end, good will triumph over evil and God's promises will be fulfilled.

More than two thousand years after the death and Resurrection of Jesus, there are still people who want to abandon the sick, leave the poor to their lot, and care only for those members of society who are 'productive'. As Christians, we need to see beyond that limited vision so that we can bring the Good News of Jesus to our homes, to our parishes, to our country and to the world.

A Question of Faith

Why do we fast before receiving Holy Communion at Mass?

It is required that those who intend to receive Holy Communion fast for one hour before Mass. We are asked to fast from all food except water during this hour. We do this to help us to be more aware of the gift that we are about to receive in Holy Communion. We believe that what we receive is more than just bread and wine – it is the Body and Blood of Jesus, who is truly present among us.



Theme: Do This In Memory of Me

Hello again, boys and girls!

Soon, you will receive Holy Communion for the first time. How exciting! You are probably looking forward to many things, including celebrating with your family and friends on the day.

Remember that while this is the first time you will receive Jesus in Holy Communion, it won't be the last! From now on, every time you go to Mass, you are invited to receive Holy Communion.

Jesus shared his Body and Blood, in the form of bread and wine, with his disciples at the Last Supper. Then he said to them, 'Do this in memory of me.' When we go to Mass, we are doing exactly what Jesus asked his followers to do at the Last Supper. When we receive Holy Communion, Jesus comes to us and stays with us in a very special way.



This Month's Focus: The Last Supper

On the night before he died, Jesus called together his disciples. He knew this would be his last meal and he wanted to share it with his closest friends.

Unscramble the words to read what Jesus said at the Last Supper.

Jesus took a piece of bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying:

AKET NAD TEA.

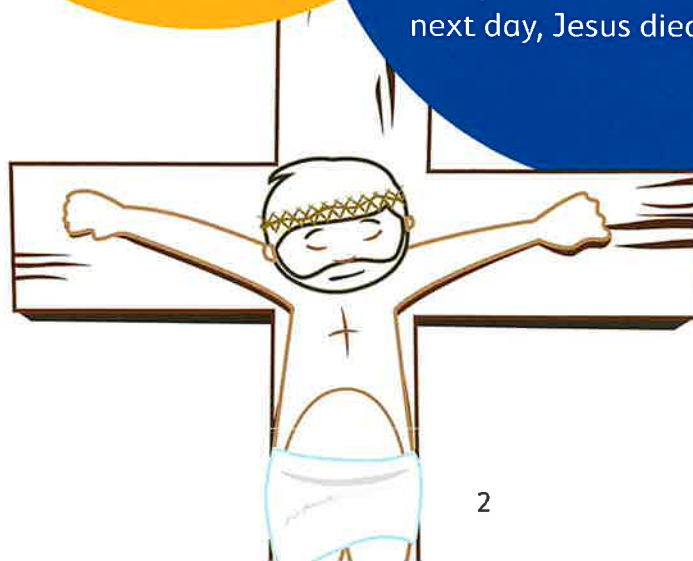
HSTI SI YM OYBD.

Then he took a cup of wine, blessed it and gave it to his disciples. He said:

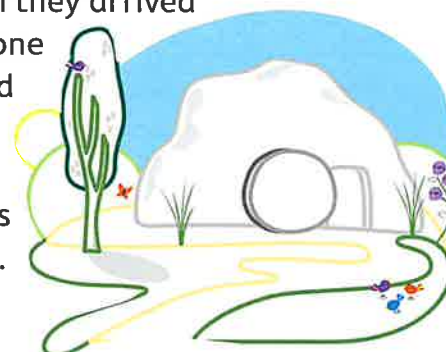
AKET NAD RIKDN.

HSTI SI YM OBOLD.

Then he asked his friends to do this again, after he had gone, as a way of remembering him. The next day, Jesus died on the Cross.



Three days after Jesus died, three women who were his friends went to his tomb. When they arrived there, they saw that the big stone at the entrance had been rolled back. A young man was sitting inside the tomb. This young man told the women that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The women rushed off to tell the disciples what they had heard and seen.



Jesus was now with God the Father in heaven. His friends remembered what he had asked them to do at the Last Supper. And so they gathered together often, took bread and wine, blessed them in the way Jesus had showed them, and shared them together. They knew that the Risen Jesus was with them when they did this.

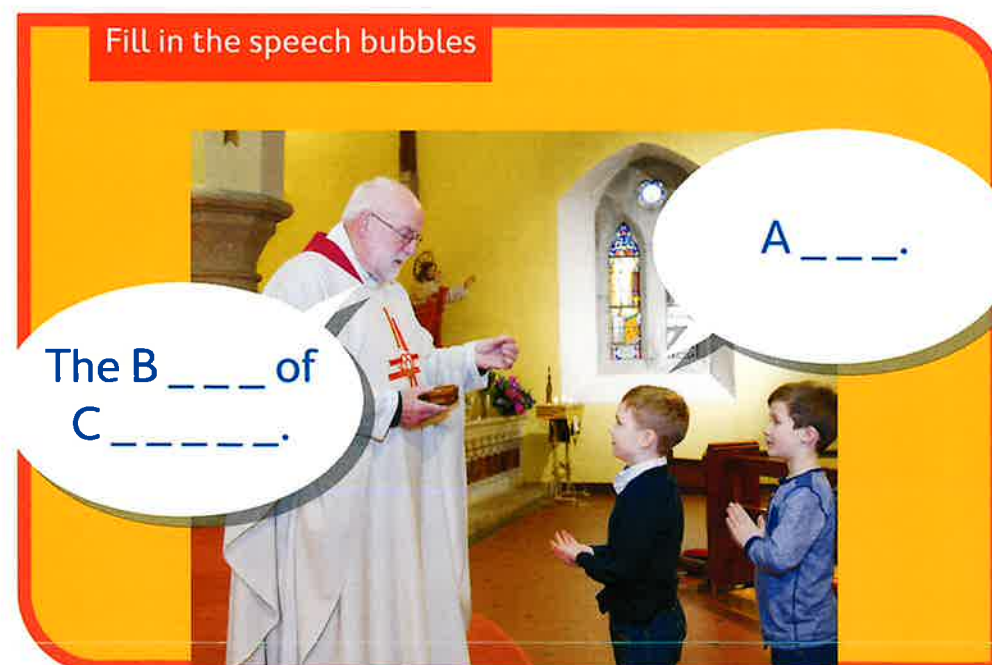
We, too, are friends of Jesus, and so, at Mass, we gather together as he asked us to. In memory of what Jesus did at the Last Supper, the priest takes the bread, blesses it and breaks it, and shares it with those who are gathered. We know that when we do this, the Risen Jesus is with us, just as he was with his friends on the night before he died.



Fill in the speech bubbles

The B ____ of
C ____.

A ____.



We say a special prayer before we receive Holy Communion. It is called the *Prayer before Communion*.

Prayer before Communion

Lord Jesus, come to me.

Lord Jesus, give me your love.

Lord Jesus, come to me and give me yourself.

Lord Jesus, friend of children, come to me.

Lord Jesus, you are my Lord and my God.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray in silence after receiving Holy Communion. There is a special prayer we say called the *Prayer after Communion*.

Prayer after Communion

Lord Jesus, I love and adore you.

You're a special friend to me.

Welcome, Lord Jesus, O welcome,

Thank you for coming to me.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, O thank you

For giving yourself to me.

Make me strong to show your love

Wherever I may be.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay

Close by me forever and love me, I pray.

Bless all of us children in your loving care

And bring us to heaven to live with you there.

I'm ready now, Lord Jesus,

To show how much I care.

I'm ready now to give your love

At home and everywhere. Amen.

With your child this month

IN SCHOOL

As the school year draws to a close, children will be given an opportunity to reflect on their experience in Second Class. Spend some time chatting with your child about the year gone by. Ask him/her to recall a favourite story, poem or song that he/she learned from the *Grow in Love* programme. Ask them to write or draw a picture about it. Invite them to share it with others, such as grandparents or godparents.

IN THE PARISH

The month of June is traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart helps us to reflect on God's immense and immeasurable love, which was shown to us most clearly in the person of Jesus. It is important that the children are reminded of God's never-ending love for them. This love is made concrete by you, their parents/guardians and families. If there is a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in your church, take your child to see it at some stage this month. Chat to him/her about how much God loves them, and the ways in which they can see this love in their lives.

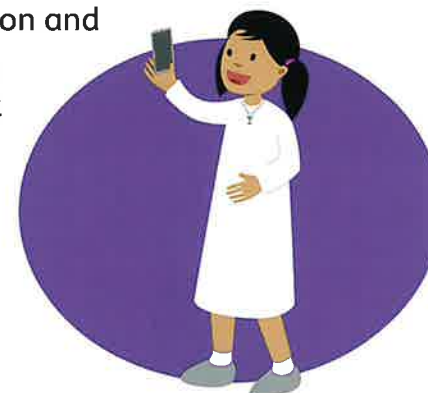
AT HOME

Take some time this month to go through the items in your child's Prayer Space and chat together about each of them. For example, rosary beads might help children to recall the sad (sorrowful) and happy (joyful) moments in the life of Jesus and Mary – see how many of those moments they can remember. Holy water might remind children of Baptism – chat to them about being part of God's family. Prayers such as the *Our Father*, *Act of Sorrow* and *Prayers Before/After Holy Communion* can also be revisited this month. Invite your child to complete their *Grow in Love* poster by pasting the *Glory Be to the Father* (from next page) on to space no 8.



Parents'/Guardians' Page

The school year is drawing to a close, the year's work is almost done and the long summer beckons us forth. In many ways, we have come to the end of your family's journey towards your child's first celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. In other ways, however, we hope that this is just the beginning of your family's lifelong journey towards a deeper relationship with God, supported by your parish community.



Over the past nine months, the *Grow in Love* parish newsletters have suggested many ways for you and your family to be reminded of God's presence in your daily lives. We hope that you have grown closer to God and to one another this year, whether by chatting to your child about the *Grow in Love* programme that he/she does in school, by praying with him/her at home, or by discovering more about the Mass. We now invite you to continue that journey together with our parish family.

In this *Grow in Love* newsletter, we have given you some ideas to help your family to keep on growing in faith. We hope that, over time, you will add your own faith practices to these, and that, together with regular attendance at Sunday Mass, they will help your family to share a life-giving relationship with God for many years to come.

Glory Be to the Father

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.



Theme: Living as Followers of Jesus

Hello again, boys and girls!

By the time you read this newsletter, you will have received Holy Communion for the first time. Congratulations! From now on, you are invited to receive Holy Communion every time you go to Mass. Holy Communion helps us to live as followers of Jesus. It strengthens us to love God and one another more, and to show love and care for those who are poor or in need.

I live as a follower
of Jesus by helping
at home.

I live as a follower
of Jesus by sharing
what I have with
others.

I live as a follower
of Jesus by taking
care of the earth.

How can you show that
you are a follower of Jesus?

We show by the way we live that we are followers of Jesus

Even though your journey towards First Holy Communion is complete, your relationship with God will continue for many, many years to come. Try some of these activities at home to make sure you don't forget about God as you continue on into Third Class and beyond.

Pray Grace Before and After Meals

Grown-ups and children can take turns saying Grace, either as a formal prayer or by using your own words. Or, everyone at the table could mention one thing that they are thankful for.



Make the Sign of the Cross

When you hear an ambulance siren, say a quiet prayer for the person who is sick or injured, and for his/her family and friends. Ask God to bless paramedics, nurses, doctors and all those who take care of sick people at home or in hospital. Do the same when you pass a funeral procession.



Read Bible stories together

Find a good children's Bible with lots of pictures in it and read a story with your family at bedtime.



Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

You have celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time this year. Decide when you will celebrate it again. Many parishes have Advent and Lenten Reconciliation services that you can attend.



Do acts of kindness

If we are to be true followers of Jesus, we must act as Jesus did. This might mean giving to charity, or helping a neighbour or family member who is in need.



Pray for people who have died

Continue to remember and pray for people who have died. Look at their photos and memorial cards, and ask God to bless them. Pray for them in a particular way during the month of November.



Use holy water

Keep refilling your holy water bottle every now and then, and bless yourself and others. You might also ask your family to get a holy water font and place it next to your hall door so that you can bless yourself before you leave your home.

Pray Morning and Night Prayers

When you wake up in the morning, say 'Good morning!' to God. Tell God what you are looking forward to about the day, or if there is something you are worried about. Last thing before you go to bed, tell God one good thing about your day and thank God for it.



Go to Mass

Remember, the more often you go to Mass and receive Holy Communion, the closer your relationship with Jesus will be. Continue to go to Mass every week with your family, and thank God for all the good things that happened during the week. Remember, God is always listening to you and ready to help you if you ask.

