

# Rejoice & Give Thanks!



ACCOMPANYING PARENTS IN THE PARISH  
TOWARDS THE CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION  
AND  
HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE FIRST TIME

## FACILITATORS GUIDE

# Introduction



Rejoice and Give Thanks is a video resource for parent conversations about the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Communion for the first time.

This resource aims to help parish facilitators engage with parents to help them accompany their child.

## **Four Sessions for Parents**

There are four parent sessions, two for the Reconciliation family preparation and two for preparation towards Holy Communion for the first time.

- These aim at building parent confidence, so that they can support their child at home.
- Each session begins with a moment of prayer, which then leads into exploring a theme.
- This leads on to practical ways parents can continue to support their child to grow in faith.
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Rejoice is the chosen theme for Reconciliation preparation as this links to the Gospel story of the prodigal son and how God always rejoices when we want to change.

The two Rejoice sessions will equip parents to engage more fully in their child's preparation and also connect with the celebration of this sacrament.

Following on from this the Give Thanks sessions connect with the word EUCHARIST which means thanksgiving.

The two parent's sessions equip the family to engage in full participation, helping their child to take their part in responses and prayers so as to get the very best from the celebration.

# Your Role as Facilitator

Ideally this video resource will be led by a First Communion Team.

Each session follows a simple format to engage parents in a family friendly way.

Every session begins with a simple **OPENING PRAYER**.

The prayer helps parents to focus on the themes and begin to share.

There are also moments of **EXPLORING TOGETHER**.

This leads on to suggestions to help parents chat at home and **REFLECT WITH THEIR CHILD**.

Every session ends with **PRAYER FOR GOING HOME**.

There is also a final reminder to parents of simple ways they can help their child to prepare in suggested **FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES**.

Your role as facilitator is about guiding the process and enabling parents to share as much as they feel comfortable with.

In this you will:

- **Lead prayer** confidently
- **Engage** with the reflection questions
- **Organise** the space for gathering into small groups, preferably at tables
- **Ensure** that a laptop computer and projection screen is in place
- **Print out** prayer resources and suggested home activities
- **Ensure** that the gathering does not go over one hour
- **Keep in touch** with parents so that you can continue to support them
- **Plan the timing** of the sessions so that there are two sessions before Reconciliation over two months and then there are two more parent sessions over two months before Holy Communion for the first time takes place.

# Rejoice Session One:

## Focus on God's Love

### INTRODUCTION

The video invites parents to take part in a moment of prayer, the message in the prayer is that God loves us totally and unconditionally.

After the prayer, you will invite parents to share on the following starter questions:

- What does this prayer say to you about your role as a parent?
- What does it teach us about God?

Keep in mind that sharing will take place in small groups.

This should take no more than five minutes, following on from this you can invite parents to share aloud what their response might be in a large group forum.

The tone is invitational, rather than reporting back, it is important at this stage that parents are not forced to share but rather invited to share as little or much as they find comfortable.

### YOUR OWN MEMORIES

The video connects to two adults who are sharing their own memories of first confession, having been asked the following questions:

- Can you remember when you made your first confession?
- What kind of preparation took place?
- What was good about the experience?
- What was difficult for you?
- How do you feel about this sacrament as an adult?

Parents are invited to listen and notice in what way/s this connects with their own memories and experience.

### REFLECT WITH YOUR CHILD

Following on from this you will encourage parents to explore easy ways they can talk about God to their child in this time of preparation from the video.

Here is the script:

You can easily help your child in this year by using this reflection about God  
God never stops loving us  
God's love has no conditions no matter what  
God is our personal friend  
God always forgives when we say sorry  
God does not remember our sins or keep a record of them  
We can thank God every day in prayer for all that he does for us  
We can speak to God in our own words  
We can listen to God in moments of silence  
We can say sorry then move on  
We can remember that God rejoices when we say sorry

# Rejoice Session One:

## Focus on God's Love

After exploring these, you can move on to invite parents to share on the following question:

- As a parent why do you think these positive messages are so important for your child to hear in this year of preparation?

Once more you will lead a time of listening together

### **PRAYER FOR GOING HOME**

As you facilitate the final part of the session, encourage parents to listen to the piece of scripture from the Gospel of Luke and how it speaks to them.

There is more joy in heaven  
Over one sinner who returns home  
Than over ninety-nine good living people  
Who think they don't need to come home.

### **IMAGINE THIS IS GOD'S MESSAGE FOR YOUR FAMILY**

You can help parents to say these words together as a way of connecting once more with the theme of rejoicing.

When you say sorry I rejoice  
When you forgive I rejoice  
When you tell the truth I rejoice  
When you reach out to others in kindness I rejoice  
When you love one another I rejoice

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD**

Finally make sure that you give time to looking at how parents can continue to help their child at home using the following simple suggestions:

- Never speak of God as punishing
- Encourage your child to say sorry often
- Teach your child not to hold grudges
- Model this by saying sorry when you get it wrong
- Build up habits of simple prayer
- At Mass focus on the Lord have mercy, the Our Father and the Sign of Peace
- Continue to positively build up your child in love every day

# Rejoice Session Two:

## Focus on Choices

### INTRODUCTION

The video invites parents to take part in a moment of prayer, the message in this prayer emphasises how we teach more by our actions than our words and how it takes courage to say sorry?

After the prayer, you will invite parents to share on the following starter questions:

- What does this prayer say to you about your role as a parent?
- What does it teach us about God?

Keep in mind that sharing will take place in small groups. This should take no more than five minutes, following on from this you can invite parents to share aloud what their response might be in a large group forum.

The tone is invitational, rather than reporting back, it is important at this stage that parents are not forced to share but rather invited to share as little or much as they find comfortable.

### EXPLORING CHOICES

As parents and children move closer to the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation, your role as facilitator is about exploring how we make choices every day. These are explored in the video. After looking at the video together you will lead a time of sharing on the following question.

- Why do you think these messages are so important for your child in this year?

Once more time will be given to small group sharing in table talk, then followed by time listening to responses in the large group.

### REFLECT WITH YOUR CHILD

You can spend time helping parents to see that there are many ways we can help our children to understand what this means and how we can rely on God's love and help in making the best choices. The video indicates simple ways of exploring this.

- Think about the choices they make every day
- Realise that we can make choices for love, to be kind, helpful and understanding
- Understand that sometimes we do not make good choices, and this can hurt others and ourselves
- Notice that Jesus calls us to love one another as he loved us
- See that when we are not sure about what choice to make we can ask 'What would Jesus do?'
- Realise we can say sorry for the times we forget to love
- Recognise that we can start afresh when we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation
- We can remember the times in the day when we made good choices and give thanks to God for helping us
- We can remember the times in the day when our choices were less good and ask for God's help
- All God asks of us is that we love one another

# Rejoice Session Two:

## Focus on Choices

### PRAYER FOR GOING HOME

As you facilitate the final part of the session, encourage parents to listen to the piece of scripture from the Gospel of Luke and how it speaks to them.

I give you a new commandment: Love one another  
You must love each other as I have loved you  
Imagine this is God's message for your family  
Love is patient and kind.  
Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and is not proud.  
Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily.  
Love does not remember wrongs done against it.  
Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth.  
Love patiently accepts all things.

You can invite parents to replace the word 'love' with Jesus.  
Then after reading this aloud, replace the word 'love' with your own name.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD

Finally make sure that you give time to looking at how parents can continue to help their child at home using the following simple suggestions:

- Have family chats about choices you can make for love
- Encourage your child to remember the importance of love
- Teach your child that doing something on purpose is more serious than making a mistake
- Help your child to own up to what they've done
- As a parent be the first to say sorry
- Encourage your child to ask 'What would Jesus do?'
- Always positively build up your child in love

# First Session on Holy Communion: Thanks Giving

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome parents to the first session about Holy Communion.

Explain that in this session they are invited to take time together to explore ways they can support their child further in preparing to celebrate this sacrament for the first time.

Invite parents to pray together:

Lord our God, as we prepare in this year  
We thank you for gathering us here together  
We thank you for your goodness and kindness  
We thank you for sending your Son Jesus  
We thank you for his body and blood  
We thank you for sharing this gift with us  
For all the good things you give, we thank you.

## **SHARE TOGETHER**

After this you will invite parents to SHARE on the following simple questions, remembering once more that there are no right or wrong answers:

- What does this prayer tell us about Mass?
- Why do you think it is important to thank God?

Once more time will be given to small group sharing in table talk, then followed by time listening to responses in the large group.

## **EXPLORING WHAT MASS MEANS TO US**

The video explores what some parents shared when asked 'What does Mass mean to you?'

After viewing this you will invite parents in small groups to explore the following questions:

- Which of these parent replies are most like your own?
- How would you like to help your child to prepare well for Holy Communion for the first time?

## **SHARING MEMORIES AND FAMILY CHATS**

This then moves into a moment of deeper reflection about memories and the possibilities for family chats. You can ask these questions.

- Can you find your own first Communion photos?
- Could you have a chat about that day with your child and share who was with you and the happiness of the day?
- Can you share why the day was so special for you?
- Could you have a chat about why this time of preparation is a great opportunity to pray together as a family at Mass?

# First Session on Holy Communion: Thanks Giving

- Can you create a small prayer area in your home with the pictures of your first communion and give thanks for the help you were given by family and friends?

SHARE TOGETHER ABOUT WHAT YOU FEEL YOU CAN DO

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART

The video suggests ten ways that parents can help children to take their part at Mass. As a facilitator you can encourage parents to build their child's confidence as much as possible using these ten simple suggestions.

## PRAYER FOR GOING HOME

As in the reconciliation sessions, this session also ends by listening to a piece of scripture this time from the Gospel of Mark

When the disciples were eating together Jesus took some bread,  
He gave thanks and broke the bread and gave it to them saying:  
'Take this and eat it, this is my body.'  
Then Jesus took a cup and he gave thanks and said  
'This is my blood, poured out for many.'

You will end the prayer by inviting parents to remember all that they are grateful for and use this response prayer.

- For our family and friends **WE GIVE YOU THANKS**
- For our daily food **WE GIVE YOU THANKS**
- For our happiness and health **WE GIVE YOU THANKS**
- For all God's gifts **WE GIVE YOU THANKS**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD

Finally, before going home remind parents of easy activities they can do to help their child, as the time for their holy communion for the first time draws closer:

- Encourage your child to say thank you often in prayer
- Create a simple prayer space at home
- Help your child to learn the responses for Mass so that they are confident
- When you are at Mass sit near the front and help your child join in
- At home use the prayer before Holy Communion each night and say these together

# Second Session on Holy Communion: Always Special

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome parents to the second session about Holy Communion.

In this session you are going to explore ways parents can support their child further in preparing to celebrate this sacrament for the first time.

Begin the session together with a prayer.

When we gather in your name	YOU ARE WITH US
When we listen to your word	YOU ARE WITH US
When we give you thanks and praise	YOU ARE WITH US
When we help someone in need	YOU ARE WITH US
When we ask for your forgiveness	YOU ARE WITH US
When we place our trust in you	YOU ARE WITH US

## SHARE TOGETHER

Invite parents to SHARE on the following simple questions, remembering once more that there are no right or wrong answers:

- How does this prayer connect us with Holy Communion?
- When do you feel God is with you every day?

## EXPLORING WHAT HOLY COMMUNION MEANS TO US

Following on from this you will lead parents to reflect on what holy communion means to them using the prompts from previous parent responses. Here is what some parents said when asked 'what does Holy Communion mean to you?'

- For me it's the time when I can really talk to Jesus
- I feel that it's special because it's about Him and me
- Knowing that I am connected to Jesus is just so supportive
- I remember my time as a child and how special I felt, the feeling returns for me
- I have to be honest, I've got out of the habit of going to communion, but I remember when I was a child I felt loved
- Holy Communion just fills me with strength to keep going
- It blows my mind that I can be united to Jesus so closely

**INVITE** parents to share together in small groups using these questions:

- Which of these parent replies are most like your own?
- What would you like to say to your child about this special moment?

# Second Session on Holy Communion: Always Special

## SHARING WHY THIS IS SPECIAL

Now go deeper by exploring what Pope Francis says about Holy Communion and why it is so special.

‘What makes our First Communion a truly blessed event is not the word ‘first’ but the ‘communion.’  
Because of whom we receive, the second, third, next, and last Communion should always be as special.  
It is such a holy, joyful occasion.  
That is why girls wear white dresses and boys wear special ties and white shirts.  
Relatives are invited. Parents take pictures. We celebrate.  
The very act of celebrating reveals our belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.’

Then take time to look at the following questions, once more inviting small group sharing.

- What makes Holy Communion for the first time so special for your family?
- What kind of support would you need to help you and your child, so that holy communion is special every time we receive?

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART

Emphasise to parents that as Holy Communion time grows closer there are many simple ways they can help their child to continue to take part and be ready to receive.

Here are some suggestions:

1. When you are at Mass continue to encourage your child to join in and take their part
2. Help your child to sing or say Mass parts
3. Keep praying at home
4. Help your child to learn the prayers before holy communion
5. You can also help your child to learn the prayers after receiving holy communion
6. Practise at home how to receive, help your child to imagine the moment
7. Have chats at home about why this is such a special moment
8. You can talk to your child about what Pope Francis says

# Second Session on Holy Communion: Always Special

## PRAYER FOR GOING HOME

End once more by using the prayer for going home, inviting parents to listen to these words from the Gospel of Luke

‘Let the children come to me,  
and don’t hold them back  
because the Kingdom of God is theirs.’

Bring the session to a close by inviting parents to pray for their child using this litany

- As we prepare together to receive you **LORD JESUS BE WITH US**
- As we draw closer to this special time **LORD JESUS BE WITH US**
- As we walk together as one family **LORD JESUS BE WITH US**
- As we enjoy every day **LORD JESUS BE WITH US**
- As we experience your presence **LORD JESUS BE WITH US**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD

Finally encourage parents to use these very simple ways of engaging their child their as holy communion for the first time draws closer:

- Encourage your child to say the prayers before and after holy communion
- Continue to use a simple prayer space at home
- Continue to help your child respond and take part at Mass
- Sit near the front at Mass so that your child can see everything
- Help your child to see that this is only the first of many times they will receive communion
- Talk to your child about how Jesus is with us

# Practical Points

## Prayers to learn at home for Reconciliation

### Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy... **Lord, have mercy**  
Christ, have mercy... **Christ, have mercy**  
Lord, have mercy... **Lord, have mercy**

### 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.

### Sign of Peace

Peace be with you...  
**And with your Spirit**

### 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.

### Prayer for Forgiveness

God our Father,  
help me to remember the times  
when I didn't live as Jesus asked me to.  
Help me to be sorry and to try again.  
Amen.

### Prayer After Forgiveness

God our Father,  
thank you for forgiving me.  
Help me to love others.  
Help me to live as Jesus asked me to.  
Amen.



# Practical Points

## Prayers to learn at home for Holy 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.  
Amen.

### 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.

### Greeting

The Lord be with you...  
**And with your Spirit**

### Mystery of Faith

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

**or**

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

**or**

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

### When receiving Holy Communion

The Body of Christ... **Amen**

### How to receive Holy Communion

Place your left hand over your right  
hand and hold your hands out straight.  
When the priest or minister says

'The Body of Christ' you say '**Amen**'

The priest places the host on your hand  
like an altar. Take up the host with one  
hand then place in your mouth.  
Make sure to swallow the host.

Practise this at home.

**Rejoice Session One:**  
How You Can Help Your Child

- Never speak of God as punishing
- Encourage your child to say sorry often
- Teach your child not to hold grudges
- Model this by saying sorry when you get it wrong
- Build up habits of simple prayer
- At Mass focus on the Lord have mercy, the Our Father and the Sign of Peace
- Continue to positively build up your child in love every day

**Rejoice Session Two:**  
How You Can Help Your Child

- Have family chats about choices you can make for love
- Encourage your child to remember the importance of love
- Teach your child that doing something on purpose is more serious than making a mistake
- Help your child to own up to what they've done
- As a parent be the first to say sorry
- Encourage your child to ask 'What would Jesus do?'
- Always positively build up your child in love

**First Session on Holy Communion:**  
How You Can Help Your Child

- Encourage your child to say thank you often in prayer
- Create a simple prayer space at home
- Help your child to learn the responses for Mass so that they are confident
- When you are at Mass sit near the front and help your child join in
- At home use the prayer before Holy Communion each night and say these together

**Second Session on Holy Communion:**  
How You Can Help Your Child

- Encourage your child to say the prayers before and after holy communion
- Continue to use a simple prayer space at home
- Continue to help your child respond and take part at Mass
- Sit near the front at Mass so that your child can see everything
- Help your child to see that this is only the first of many times they will receive communion
- Talk to your child about how Jesus is with us

Archdiocese of Dublin