



# St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

## 'Helping your child to know God'



A Handbook for Parents



## Welcome to Our School

As a Catholic school, everything we strive to do is in the context of a caring and responsible Christian community – living out Gospel Values.

### ‘Christ at the centre of all that we do’

Whilst we have children and families from Catholic backgrounds, we do have children, families and staff from other Christian faiths, other faiths and no faith. Our school reflects many communities. As a Catholic School, getting to know God, learning about God and the Church as well as acts of prayer and worship and special celebrations, are a part of our school life all interwoven through the curriculum and all that we do.

A key focus is on learning respect, tolerance and understanding for all peoples whatever their background and this booklet will help you to know more about what happens at school and be able to share your child’s experience with them.

In school, children will experience Mass celebrations, prayer times, reflection times and rich singing experience, and will have the opportunity to develop and deepen their knowledge and faith.

**This booklet will help you know about some of the key events and learning your child will experience and help you with ideas of how you could support this at home.**

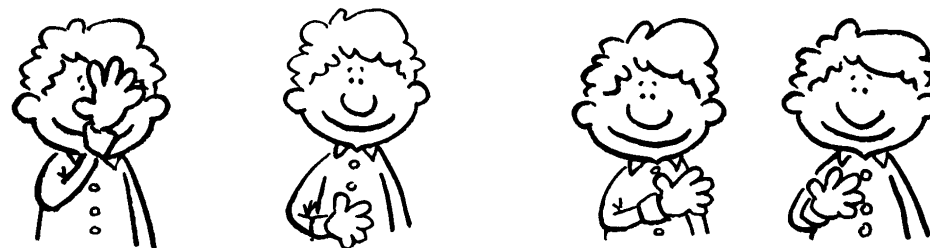
## PRAYING

There is no wrong or right way to talk to God. Sometimes we talk to God as we would another person. This can be when we are working, playing, or sitting in a group. Sometimes we use formal prayers to express what we want to say. This can be in class, in a group, at Mass or in an assembly.

When we get ready to pray we usually start by blessing ourselves and making the sign of the cross. We often say – we are getting ready to talk and listen to Jesus.

### The Sign of the Cross

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



We learn different formal prayers as we journey through the school – such as the sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father and Glory Be.

Other prayers are also taught, the Peace Prayer and Grace before Meals.

In Year 2 the children may take part in the Mass by learning simple responses and preparing readings and Bidding Prayers.

Often we sing prayers which helps us learn the words and join together.

## Some of Our Prayers

### Hail Mary

Hail Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen

### 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

### Glory Be

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

### The Rosary

The rosary is a special way of praying to God that honours Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The month of May is dedicated to Mary the Mother of Jesus, who is often called Our Lady. The month of October is dedicated to the Rosary



### What Can You Do?

Talk to your child about what they see and experience at school. Help them to understand that prayer may be something new or unfamiliar to them but that prayer times are a special time. Encourage them to know that these are special times and respect should be shown by joining in, sitting quietly or reflecting on the theme or prayer.

Try to pray often with your child, very simply. Make it a quiet time. Use your own words to speak to Jesus.

Try to pray as a family - pray about what you can all be thankful for, have a 'forgiving' time for all the family.

Here are some simple ideas that you may find useful when praying with your child.

Help your child to sit quietly for a few minutes while you talk to him or her about the day.

Use the time to say thank you to God for the day.

Take time to look at the things of nature e.g. a spider's web, the new moon or a flower. Encourage a sense of awe in your child.

### Church

Visit the Church whenever you can. Go to Mass and meet the priest, pop in and say a prayer, take time to look around and talk about what you see. This will help your child get to know some of the things we will talk about in lessons.



## **THE LITURGICAL YEAR & SOME KEY EVENTS**

There are different parts of the year when we celebrate special events of the Church at school. The seasons of the Church are often linked to colours used for display and clothing of the priest.

Green - for most of the year – Ordinary time

Purple – for Lent and Advent

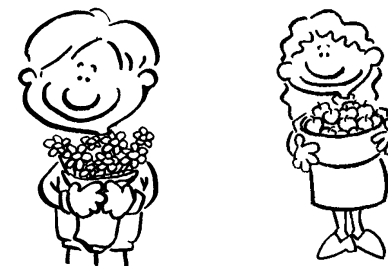
Gold for – Epiphany and Easter

Red - Pentecost

The seasons of the Church present wonderful opportunities for talking to your child about God Our Father, The Holy Spirit, Jesus and His mother Mary.

### **Harvest Festival**

In the autumn term at school we celebrate Harvest Festival to thank God for the bounty of the earth and the many gifts that He gives us. It is an opportunity to remember those in our country and around the world who have very little or nothing. Children are encouraged to think of ways in which they can give and share. When you are preparing your gifts for the Harvest Festival use that time to talk to your child about how much we have to thank God for.



### **All Saints (Nov 1)**

Saints are people who love Jesus. Some saints are famous and some are ordinary people like you and me. That is why on this day we remember all those who have loved Jesus. Those who are less well known are not forgotten even if we do not know their names. You could talk to your child about famous saints, for example St Francis or St Teresa. If your child has a saint's name you could use a book of saints to find out about the life of that saint and others.

### **All Souls (Nov 2)**

This is the time when we remember all those people in our families who have died.

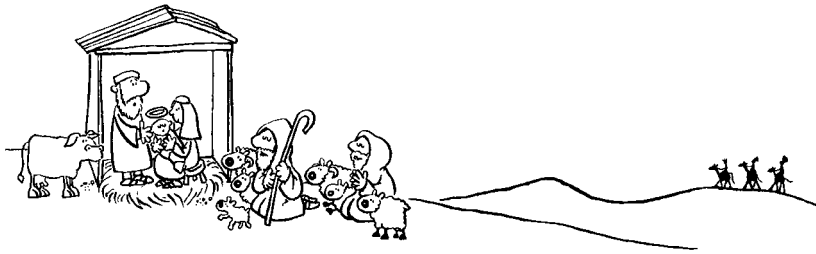
### **Advent**

Advent is a time when we get ready for Jesus' birthday. There are four Sundays in Advent leading up to the birth of Jesus.



Try to choose an Advent calendar that tells the Christmas story. Make your own Advent wreath, and light a candle on each of the Sundays in Advent.

Help your child to anticipate the birth of Jesus and get excited about it. Talk to your child about the preparations you are making to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Try to help your child to understand that without celebrating the birth of Jesus there would be no presents at this time.

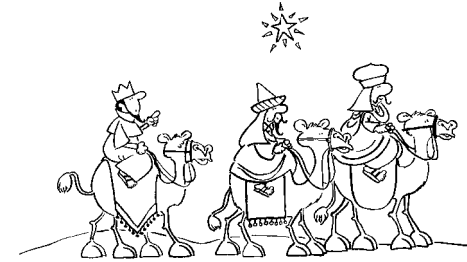


Christmas is a happy time but we also think about people who are unloved and sad, lonely or poor.

Make a Crib and put it in a place of honour. Start with an empty crib and place some straw in the crib for each kind act during the day. The figure of the Christ Child is not placed in the crib until Christmas Eve. By that time the crib should be ready.

### Epiphany (Jan 6)

On the feast of Epiphany we remember the Three Wise Men who brought gifts to Jesus. These were Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.



### Candlemas or the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Feb 2)

After Jesus was born Mary and Joseph took Him to be presented to God in the temple and to give thanks for their baby. Talk with your child about their baptism and how you presented them to God, light their baptismal candle and let them know that you thanked God for their safe arrival.



### St Joseph's Day (Mar 19)

This feast day of our patron saint is very special to us and we mark the occasion each year with a day of celebration. There is a special assembly during the school day.



## Lent

Lent is a time for us to do something extra for God to show that we love Him. It is a time when we try to think carefully about the things we have done to make God sad.

Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Day is the day before Lent begins. Make pancakes and explain to your child that in the past this was a way of using up all the food in the house before the fasting of Lent began.

Lent is a time of preparation and lasts for 40 days. It reminds us of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert praying.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. In school our Lay Chaplain distributes ashes, which are used to make the shape of a cross on our foreheads. This is a sign to show God's forgiveness.

Encourage your child to do something special during Lent e.g. do a kind act for someone in the family. Help your child to think of ways to help others.

The last week of Lent begins on Palm Sunday. We are reminded that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and that people spread palm branches in front of him.

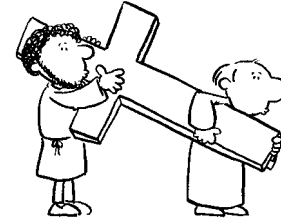


On Maundy Thursday Jesus ate His last meal with His special friends, the Last Supper, before He went to the Garden of Olives to pray for strength. In church the priest washes the feet of 12 people to remind us that Jesus

washed the feet of the disciples to show how much He loved them and to remind them that they must love and help each other. He gave them bread and wine to remember Him. He said '***This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in memory of Me.***

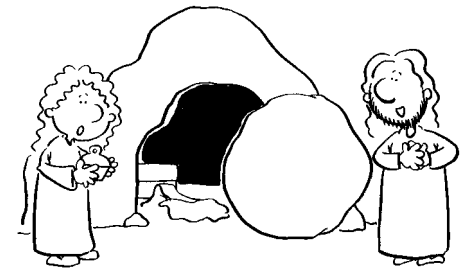


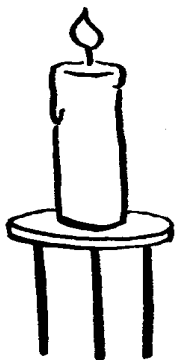
On Good Friday or 'God's Friday' as it used to be known, the church is very quiet, no colours, no music, no decoration. The crucifix is a very important part of the Good Friday liturgy because it reminds us that Jesus died for everyone.



Easter is one of the happiest times in the Church's year. It is the time when Jesus rose from the dead and reminds us that Jesus is alive today.

Make an Easter Garden. Use stones, moss, small plants or flowers and three crosses made from twigs.





Make a Paschal candle and decorate it. At home you could light the Paschal candle to remind everyone that Jesus has risen and is alive today.



Find the story of Pentecost in the bible and talk about how the friends of Jesus might have felt. One of the symbols used for the Holy Spirit is a dove. We can remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit is there to help us too.

### **Ascension**

Ascension is the day when we remember that Jesus went up to Heaven to be with God, His Father, and His friends knew that they would not see Him on earth any more.



### **Pentecost**

The feast of Pentecost is also known as Whit Sunday. It is the day when the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus' friends because Jesus had promised to send them a helper so that they could spread the Good News that Jesus came to save us.

### **And finally .....**

We hope that you will find this booklet useful in helping your child on their faith journey.

These items may be helpful for you to have at home;

- ❖ a bible
- ❖ a book about the lives of the saints
- ❖ a rosary
- ❖ a children's Mass book
- ❖ a crucifix
- ❖ Stories that Jesus told



