

Formation for Holy Communion 2024

PPT 1

Prayer

It's really wonderful to see such a large group of parents here this morning especially as it is the beginning of half term. Thank you so much for being here.

I want to cover two things with you this morning: i) to share with you the new formation for Holy Communion with dates and times and ii) to say something about Novak Djokovic, Service Stations and the practice of our Catholic faith

I want to do this in a way completely frank, adult and honest way, I do not think it is helpful to talk down to people or to be dishonest with them. I hope that you will treat me with the same respect.

Here, the is the formation for Holy Communion.

PPT 2: Timetable for Formation Sessions

PPT: Dates and Times of Holy Communion Sessions:

Saturday 30th November Session 1: *Jesus is the way to the Father* "I am the way, the truth and the

life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
John 14:6

**Sunday 1st December 9.30 a.m. Mass of
Welcome** for children beginning their formation for
Holy Communion

**Saturday 25th January 2025 – Session 2 Jesus is
the Good Shepherd** “I am the Good Shepherd...I
know my own and my own know me.” John 10:11

Saturday 1st March – Session 3 Jesus is our Joy “I
have come so that they may have life and have it to
the full.” John 10:10

**Saturday 29th March – Session 4 Jesus is our
Friend** “Greater love has no man than he lay down his
life for his friends.” John 15:13

**Saturday 26th April – Session 5 Jesus is our
Healer** “And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a
bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic,
“Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.”” Mark 2:
5-12

**Saturday 17th May – Session 6 Jesus feeds us
with His own life** “I am the bread of life, whoever
comes to me will never hunger.” John 6:35

Each session will take place in the Parish Centre from 9.00 – 10.00 am, please arrive in good time as each session will begin promptly at 9.00 a.m.

This is not a First Holy Communion Programme. I am not sure about the value of programmes. I am not sure what spiritual fruits they produce in a person's life. Nor am I sure about making such a big thing about First Holy Communion, putting all the emphasis on that as if it was the prize, an end in itself.

I'm offering something different. This is formation, formation for a relationship with Jesus. And it's about that relationship with him through Holy Communion, every Holy Communion, every time we receive His Body and Blood and how that relationship with Him deepens in some fashion.

PPT 3 Pope Francis Quotation : "Who is Jesus for you?... In reality, to know the Lord, it is not enough to know something about Him, but rather to follow Him, to let oneself be touched and changed by His Gospel. It is a matter of having a relationship with Him, an encounter. I can know many things about Jesus, but if I have not encountered Him, I still do not know who Jesus is. It is this encounter that changes life: it

changes the way of being, it changes the way of thinking, it changes the relationships you have with your brothers and sisters, the willingness to accept and forgive, it changes the choices you make in life. Everything changes if you have truly come to know Jesus! Everything changes.”

I find this quotation personally challenging. Who is Jesus for you? Who is he for me? Am I content to just have an idea about him or am I willing to follow him? Do you really want to be touched and changed by His Gospel? Do I? Do you want the fullness of life he offers you and your family or are you more interested in dates and times?:

And there are some House Rules that I want to make clear and present to you from the outset

PPT: Dates and Times of Holy Communion Masses:

Saturday 7th June at 11.00 a.m.

Rehearsal and Sacrament of Reconciliation on

Wednesday 4th June at 5.00 p.m.

Saturday 21st June at 11.00 a.m.

Rehearsal and Sacrament of Reconciliation on
Wednesday 18th June at 5.00 p.m.

Saturday 28th June at 11.00 a.m.

Rehearsal and Sacrament of Reconciliation on
Wednesday 25th June at 5.00 p.m.

Parents will also be able to choose to have their child make their Holy Communion for the first time at any of the Sunday Masses during the month of June. Please speak to Fr Martin if you would prefer to do this.

PPT: House Rules:

All information about formation will be found on the parish website

- Please supply a copy of your child's baptismal certificate *before* the first formation session.
Without this certificate, your child will not be able to join the formation
- Parents will be informed via the parish website as to which Holy Communion Mass in June 2025 they have been allocated. The whole group will be divided alphabetically (by surname) and equally

into three groups and allocated to a Holy Communion Mass accordingly.

- Please make a note of this date and the date of the rehearsal which you must attend.
- You will not be able to change the Holy Communion Mass you have been allocated.
- Formation sessions begin in the parish centre promptly at 9.00 a.m. and end at 10.00 a.m. Please make sure that you are on time and do not miss any formation.
- A register will be taken of attendance at formation sessions
- If you miss any of the formation, you will be asked to postpone your child's formation until the following year.
- At all times please respect those who are helping and giving freely of their own time with the formation of your children.
- If you have any queries or concerns about the formation, please contact Fr Martin directly.

Do you have any questions about this?

5. PPT Novak Djokovic



Let me introduce you to Novak Djokovic. In my view, the best tennis player in the world today....But to become a great tennis player, he spent – especially in his youth – hours watching others play, reading about tennis and listening to his coach. But that’s not all he did. He picked up a tennis racket and put what he had learnt into practise. He began to hit balls, perfect his backhand, fine tune his serve and so on. He did it again and again. Every day. And this is the important thing: all that practise started to shape and change him as a person, until playing tennis became second nature to him.

That's true when we practice anything in life. Your children practising an instrument. Screeching away. Hitting bum notes...giving up...being bored by practising scales...being encouraged, challenged and, sometimes, made to do it...but then, with practice, getting a tune out of the instrument, taking pleasure in playing, joining an orchestra or a band and so on. Practicing to dribble a football and strike it, doing it again and again, turning up for training, and eventually playing in the team. Practicing something over time changes us.

Of course, if I only dig out my tennis racket when Wimbledon is on and the minute Wimbledon is over I stick it back in the cupboard...if I only take that violin out of its case once in a blue moon...if I like the idea of playing for West Ham, but never actually show up for football training...if I don't practise, if I don't commit, then nothing changes in my life. I do not grow, develop or mature. All that is obvious.

Practice and commitment also applies to our faith. We practise our faith. I'm not a Catholic because I say I am or because my parents are or because I have a baptismal certificate somewhere that says I am. I am a

Catholic because I practise my faith. With God's grace, I live it...sometimes it's flaky, sometimes it's alive and beautiful, but I'm doing it and living it with those around me. Our faith is not an idea. It's a relationship with Jesus through the life of His Church.

What do you think the Church looks like?

Some people think it looks like this

PPT: SERVICE STATION



This is a service station and service stations are somewhere we pass through, on the way to something else. We don't gather at a service station, it's never the goal of our journey, our interest in it is to fill a tank

with petrol and grab a bag of wine gums for the onward journey somewhere else.

Now, it seems to me that sometimes some people use their parish community as a service station. People will stop in for what they need – a Baptism, a 'church wedding', a school Certificate of Catholic Practice, a First Holy Communion – and once they've got it, they're on their way. Clutching their First Holy Communion certificate like a bag of wine gums.

PPT: Wine gums



Let me be honest with you. I haven't given my whole life to run a service station. I don't see this parish as a place that people pass through on their way to somewhere else. I see this as the place of encounter with Jesus.

I'm not interested in giving people sacramental wine gums, I want to help people enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. For those people who have drifted away from the practice of their faith, I want to give them an opportunity to reconnect with this parish community, the place of encounter with Jesus. Of course, they need to be open to that relationship with Jesus, they need to have some desire to have this relationship.

There are other people who think the Church is this:

PPT: Image of a congregation



Practising Catholics do something again and again, week in, week out, whether they feel like it or not. They make it a priority in their lives. What they do is they come into Christ's presence. They listen to his divine words. Christ speaking to them through the Sacred Scriptures. Christ teaching them with his own words and actions, his death and resurrection.

They are also fed by him. He gives them the gift of His own body and his blood and although it looks like we are consuming Him, he, in fact, is consuming us, taking us up into His divine life...and this is the miracle, if our hearts are in any way open, we begin to change and we become more Christ like: more gentle, more forgiving, more just, more prepared for the journey into eternity...more Christ like, more Catholic.

Practicing our faith means that we are shaped and formed by Christ. If you like, His divine life rubs off on ours. He becomes second nature to us: we put on his mind, we allow his sacred heart to become ours, we experience something of the life to come during this our earthly lives.

Now the only place that what I have described happens is at Sunday Mass. It does not happen in the middle of

Sainsbury's or on the school run. Jesus Christ is present to us in the Mass in a unique way.

PPT: Jesus at last supper



This time of formation is to spiritually prepare our children and ourselves to meet Jesus, to deepen our relationship with Him. Without that relationship, without a commitment today to practising your faith, then, sadly, what we are about to begin becomes about dates, times, dresses...wine gums.

I pray that these coming months are richly blessed for our children, yes, but above all for you, their parents. My prayer is simple: May our children come to know

the peace of Jesus, the light of His love, and the joy of His life within them...and may we do too.