

St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Church

From the Parish Priest: Rev. Michael O'Boy

**Letter to Parents of Year 2 Children  
Re. First Holy Communion 2023**

1<sup>st</sup> July 2022

Dear Parents, Guardians and Carers

Your child is now in Year 2 in either St Alban & Stephen Primary School, St John Fisher Primary School, or one of the many other primary schools which serve the City of St Albans and the immediate area. Typically, baptised catholic children are able to celebrate their First Holy Communion from the age of 7/8 (Year 3). So, I am writing to you well in advance with regards to our First Communion Programme for 2023.

From the outset I would like to emphasise that the First Holy Communion Programme here at St Alban & St Stephen is a parish programme for all the children of the parish, and that all communications about next year's First Communion Programme will come via the parish newsletter. If attending Sunday Mass is a part of your regular pattern this should not be a problem.

Please note that if you do not live within the boundaries of this parish and do not habitually attend Sunday Mass here at St Alban & St Stephen, you should speak with the parish priest in the parish in which you live or go to Mass about the First Communion Programme there. (This applies even if your child attends one of the two Catholic Primary schools within this parish.) However, if you live within the boundaries of another parish but habitually attend Sunday Mass here at St Alban & St Stephen your child should be able to join the First Communion Programme here. In order for your child to receive First Holy Communion he or she will need to have been baptised catholic. If your child has not been baptised please speak directly with me before signing up for the course.

If a child is to celebrate his or her First Holy Communion, it should be, in fairness to them, because Sunday Mass is part and parcel of their lived experience. Equally, if children are going to celebrate their First Holy Communion it must be because the Sunday Mass and receiving Holy Communion will be an ongoing part of their lives. The Eucharist or Holy Communion is the most precious gift we have to share. It stands at the centre of our Catholic Faith and is the very presence of Christ. So, making First Holy Communion is not something to be done lightly – something, for example, that is done because the rest of the class are doing it and you do not wish your child to 'miss' out, because it is something members of your family have always done, or because of pressure from members of the wider family.

I appreciate that there are many reasons why families do not make Sunday Mass on a regular basis, but if this is the case, I would ask you to do something about this. If you wish your child to celebrate his or her First Holy Communion in 2023 now is the time to reshape your priorities or to defer your child's First Holy Communion until such a time as Sunday Mass can be or is a priority.

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The parish is part of the Diocese of Westminster Registered Charity No. 233699

For the parish the First Communion Programme represents a major commitment of resources; both time, money and energy. However to run the programme we also need commitment from you; a commitment to the parent and children sessions listed below, a commitment to Sunday Mass, and a commitment to making your child's preparation for their First Holy Communion a part of your family life.

In addition, we also need at least 15 parents to commit to being catechists; to be part of the team that runs the children's sessions, but in particular to support a small group of between 8 & 10 children much as a teaching assistant might work in the classroom. Preparation and training for this role will be offered in the autumn. If you are willing to be a catechist please contact me at [michaeloboy@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:michaeloboy@rcdow.org.uk) before the end of July.

As you will see next year's First Communion Programme will run on a weekly basis on Saturday afternoons at 4pm from 14 January onwards. There will be breaks, corresponding with the half-term and Easter Holidays, so full attendance should be possible. The First Communion Masses themselves will take place in May. The expectation is that your child will attend all the children's sessions. These will be held in the Parish Centre which is located between the Church and Presbytery. If your child misses several sessions it may be appropriate to defer his or her First Communion to a later date. We would also expect at least one parent to attend the parent sessions. These will be held in the Church, also at 4pm.

The registration for next year's programme will be an online process, opening on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 and closing on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022. (Please visit our parish website at [albanstephen.org](http://albanstephen.org) and click on the Sacraments tab, scroll down to 'First Communion' and open the registration form for 2023.) Please be aware when registering that you will be asked a) to supply a copy of your child's baptismal certificate if they were not baptised at St Alban & St Stephen b) to indicate which of the First Reconciliation Services you wish to attend and c) to indicate your first, second and third choice of communion dates.

There will be an **Introductory Session for Parents** in the Parish Centre on **Friday 2 December 2022 at 7.30pm**.

Finally, in signing up for the First Communion Programme our assumption is that you are making a commitment to:

- the programme of children and parent sessions detailed below
- incorporating your child's preparation for First Holy Communion into your family life
- attending Sunday Mass on a weekly basis at either 6pm on Saturday, or 8am, 9am, 9.30am, 11.30am or 6pm on Sunday itself
- attending the Sunday 9.30 am Mass at which your son or daughter has been asked to read / bring up the gifts (A rota, indicating which 9.30 am Mass your child has been asked to read at etc, will be published at the start of the First Communion Programme).

If you can foresee any difficulties with these please come and speak with me.

Yours sincerely

Fr Michael O'Boy

**FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME 2023**  
**ST ALBAN & ST STEPHEN**  
**ST ALBANS**

<b>Session</b>			<b>December 2022</b>	
1		<b>Parent Meeting Only</b>	02/12/2022	7.30 pm
<b>January 2023</b>				
2	Chapter 1	In the name of the Father	14/01/2023	4.00 pm
2	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	14/01/2023	4.00 pm
3	Chapter 2	Lord have mercy	21/01/2023	4.00 pm
4	Chapter 3	Celebrating our rescue	28/01/2023	4.00 pm
<b>February 2023</b>				
5	Chapter 4	God helps me get it right	04/02/2023	4.00 pm
5	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	04/02/2023	4.00 pm
6	Chapter 5	Glory to God in the Highest	25/02/2023	4.00 pm
<b>March 2023</b>				
7	<b>First Reconciliation</b>		04/03/2023	12 Noon
	<i>Please indicate on registration your choice of time</i>		04/03/2023	2.00 pm
8	Chapter 6	The Word of the Lord	11/03/2023	4.00 pm
9	Chapter 7	Bread to offer	18/03/2023	4.00 pm
9	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	18/03/2023	4.00 pm
10	Chapter 8	Fruit of the vine	25/03/2023	4.00 pm
<b>April 2023</b>				
11	Chapter 9	Do this in memory of me	29/04/2023	4.00 pm
<b>May 2023</b>				
12	Chapter 10	Body of Christ	06/05/2023	4.00 pm
12	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	<b>Parent Meeting</b>	06/05/2023	4.00 pm
13	Chapter 11	To love and to serve	13/05/2023	4.00 pm
14	<b>First Holy Communion Masses</b>		20/05/2023	11.30 am
	<i>Please indicate on registration your first, second and third choices</i>		20/05/2023	2.00 pm
			21/05/2023	2.00 pm
			27/05/2023	11.30 am
			27/05/2023	2.00 pm
<b>June 2023</b>				
	<b>Thanksgiving Mass</b>		11/06/2023	11.30am