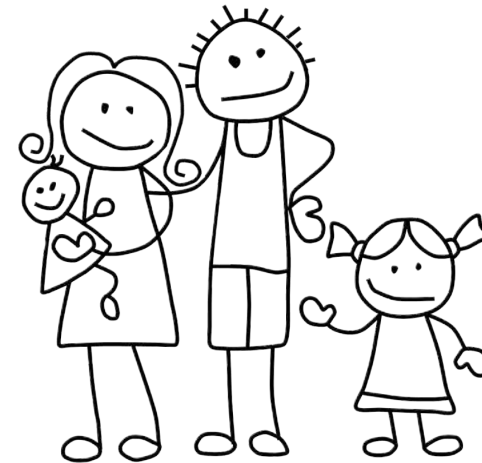


ST GEORGE AND THE ENGLISH MARTYRS



A GUIDE

FOR PARENTS AT MASS WITH BABIES, TODDLERS OR CHILDREN



REMEMBER

All families and children are welcome here at St George's and St Gregory's, because they enrich our worship of God at Mass in so many ways and help make our wonderful community a place of friendship and joy.

May God richly bless and protect you and your children.



'STRIVING TO BE CHRIST IN THE WORLD'

The presence of so many parents at Mass with their babies and children is a real blessing for our parish community. Seeing families with young children faithfully coming to Mass is a powerful witness and gives us all great hope for the future. At a baptism, parents are called to be "the first and best teachers of their children in the ways of faith." By the practice of your faith, you are living this high calling. Thank you for doing so.

Parents sometimes express concern about what to do if their baby or child is behaving in a way that is distracting to others. Here are some ideas and practical tips that you might find helpful:

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT GOES ON IN CHURCH. Explain to them that this is a special place because Jesus is truly present here. The church is different to other ‘spaces’ because it is God’s house. When we come into His house, we should behave in a respectful way and get to know Jesus as our friend by joining in with all the prayers, the gestures (such as the sign of the Cross, standing, kneeling, etc) and songs. We honour God when we behave and act in ways that are prayerful and considerate.

WEEKLY MASS ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT. When attendance is irregular, broken or happens rarely, then it becomes more difficult for our children to learn the ways of behaving that are appropriate at Mass. If parents want their children to believe that coming to Mass is important, then parents have to show them that they believe it is important.

WHEN YOU COME INTO THE CHURCH, why not take time to bless your child with holy water or, if they are old enough, allow them do it themselves and learn to make the sign of the Cross? You might explain to them that we make the sign of the Cross to show that every part of us – our minds, hearts and bodies – belongs to God. Also, light a candle with them, encouraging them to say a little prayer.

Learning these simple rituals will help your child to appreciate that they are in God’s House, a sacred place.

TRY TO GET TO MASS A LITTLE AHEAD OF TIME. Most of us would try to get to our children to school or an important event in good time. If parents are rushing into the church at the last moment or arriving late, it becomes more difficult for them and their child(ren) to settle into this special time with Jesus. If we are flustered and distracted, our children will pick up on this. Every adult has a duty to create a prayerful and composed atmosphere in the church so that, united in the Holy Spirit, we can worship God in a prayerful, joyful and reverent manner.

CHOOSE CAREFULLY WHERE YOU SIT. If you have *very young children*, it might be a good idea if you sit in a place which is situated near an area where you can walk your children up and down if they get agitated. If you have *older children*, then rather than sitting at the back where they can see very little, it is much better to have them at the front of the church where they can see and participate in all that is going on.

IF YOU COME TO MASS WITH A BUGGY and are not able to fold it and put it to one side, then there is a shorter bench at the back of the church where there is enough room to park a buggy and for you to sit beside it.

WE ALL NEED TO BE SENSIBLE ABOUT NOISE AT MASS. This is public worship with children and there is bound to be some noise and movement. Therefore, we must all support and encourage our parents with young children. However, we also need to be aware of where we are, the sacred things we are taking part in and to have a real respect for those around us. So, don’t rush to take your child out if there is some very “light” noise, but if a baby is crying or a child’s behaviour is disruptive, then take them to the inner or outer porch where you can help them to settle without too much disruption.

IF YOUR CHILD FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO SIT THROUGH THE WHOLE MASS QUIETLY, bring a “soft” toy or, for older children, colouring or religious books. Please do not bring felt tip pens to Mass as they mark the floor and are impossible to remove. Bunches of keys or “hard” toys made of plastic or metal being shaken, squeaked or banged on the floor can become very distracting.

EATING SNACKS DURING MASS IS NOT APPROPRIATE. Try and make sure that your children eat *before* they come to Mass.

PARENTS *MUST* CONSUME THE BODY OF CHRIST WHEN THEY RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION AND NOT GIVE IT TO THEIR CHILDREN TO PLAY WITH OR EAT. Sometimes children ask to receive the Body of Christ. But if they see that their parents are deeply engaged and prayerful when they receive Holy Communion, the children will come to understand that they have to wait until they are older before they can receive Holy Communion.

AFTER MASS FINISHES, WHY NOT VISIT THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL WITH YOUR CHILD? If they are old enough, teach them to genuflect before the tabernacle. Explain to them that when we genuflect, we show Jesus respect, just like when people bow or curtsy before the Queen. Jesus is our King. We should show him proper respect. Then, give them a few moments in “quiet time” thanking Jesus for his friendship and love. These rituals will help your child to appreciate that the Mass is where we meet Jesus in a very special way.

COFFEE, TEA AND JUICE are generally available after the 10:45am Mass at St George’s - this is a good way for parents to get to know each other and for children to make new friendships.